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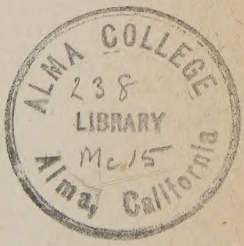
BY
RODERICK MacEACHEN
Priest of Columbus Diocese

Commandments of God



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MORAL SERIES

Vol. III

CHAPTER I

The Second Commandment

"THOU shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."[1] This is the Second Commandment. Here God commands us to honor and respect His Name. He forbids us to utter His Name without reverence.

The Name of God must be sacred to the lips of man. It is reasonable that it should be so. God is our Creator. He loves us with an infinite love. Hence, even reason suggests that we speak of God with great reverence.

The Second Commandment forbids

[1] Exodus xx, 7.

all disrespect for God's Name. It forbids us to speak His Holy Name in vain. This means that God's Holy Name should never be spoken uselessly. It should not be uttered as a common expression.

It is a sin to use the Name of God as a by-word. It is a sin to use the Name of God as an expression of anger, surprise or emphasis.

It is usually a venial sin to take God's Name in vain. Ordinarily no disrespect is intended. It is perhaps due to thoughtlessness. It does not imply contempt for God.

By habit people sometimes utter certain expressions. Such are: "O my God;" "My God, no;" and the like. This is to take God's Name in vain. Yet often it is but a thoughtless expression.

Others use God's Name with a sense of piety. Expressions of this kind are often heard in Catholic coun-

tries. Such are: "God save you," "God be good to you," and the like. These are pious expressions. They are commendable.

It is also sinful to utter the name of the saints in vain. In like manner it is sinful to speak vainly of the Sacraments and holy things.

Sometimes the Holy Name is spoken without thinking. The person does not then commit a sin.

To make frequent use of the devil's name is no sin. However, it is unbecoming in a pious Christian. For it is a name that should be detested by Christian lips.

It would seem unnecessary to command respect for God's Holy Name. Even perverted human nature can find no excuse for dishonoring this Sacred Name. The very thought of God's love and majesty is enough to make us love and revere His Holy Name.

CHAPTER II

Blasphemy, Cursing and Swearing

ANY insulting language uttered against God is blasphemy. Any word that contains disrespect for God's majesty and excellence is blasphemy. The disrespect may not be shown directly to God. It may be shown to the saints. It may be shown to holy things. Yet it always goes back to God. It is always blasphemy.

Ordinarily, blasphemy is expressed by words. However, it may also be expressed by actions. To trample on a crucifix out of contempt would be an act of blasphemy. However, blasphemy properly so called is expressed by words. The words need not be spoken. They may be written.

Blasphemy sometimes contains her-

esy. Such would be the words: "God is unjust." Again, it may merely contain an imprecation. Such would be: "May God perish."

The simple form of blasphemy contains a scoff at God. Such were the words the Jews shouted at Christ: "Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it; save thy ownself: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."[1]

Blasphemy is sometimes uttered with the explicit intention of insulting God. It is then called direct or diabolical blasphemy. Again, the person does not intend to insult God. Yet he knowingly utters words that contain contempt for God. This is called indirect blasphemy.

Blasphemy is, by its nature, a mortal sin. Even blasphemy shown to the saints is an insult to God. It bears

[1] St. Matthew xxvii, 40.

grave contempt for the supreme majesty of God.

Blasphemy was a capital offense in the Old Law. "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die; all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger. He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die."[2]

Blasphemy may be uttered without thinking. It may come from an outburst of passion. The person may not have intended to utter blasphemous words. Then it may be but a venial sin.

A person may have contracted a sinful habit of blaspheming. He is bound to strive to overcome this habit. Otherwise he can not be excused from the mortal sin of blasphemy.

Blasphemy is a sin against the virtue of religion. It may be uttered directly against God. It may be

[2] Leviticus xxiv, 16.

uttered against the saints. It may be uttered against the Sacraments or against the Church. Yet it is always a sin against the reverence due to God.

To curse is to call down evil upon another. Curses are often uttered against creatures. They may reflect upon God. Then they are blasphemy. To curse a person as a creature of God is blasphemy.

To curse the saints or sacred things is blasphemy. To speak evil about a saint is ordinarily blasphemous. It reflects on the holiness of God.

Christians who curse and swear blindly imitate unbelievers. They can give no reason for their sinful act. It is essentially the foolish sin. It is inconsistent in all save in the avowed enemies of God.

Men acquire the habit of cursing and swearing. They do not know why. In their youth they have simply learned

it from others. The evil habit of cursing and swearing has done great harm to the Christian religion. But there has been an awakening. Christian men have now set out in earnest to wipe out the sinful habit of cursing and swearing.

To curse and swear is sinful. But it is also a vulgar habit. It is a product of ignorance. It is a sign of poor breeding.

Outside of the Church the evil of cursing and swearing is growing more prevalent. It grows apace with religious indifference.

There is a great movement in the Church today. It is a protest against cursing and swearing. Countless thousands of good men have banded themselves together to guard the honor of God's Sacred Name. They form the Holy Name Society.

CHAPTER III

Vows

A VOW is a special kind of promise made to God. It is a promise to do good of a higher order. It is made freely. It is made to bind in a religious sense.

Not every promise made to God is a vow. A person may even solemnly promise God to do something. He may have no intention of binding himself in conscience. He may have not thought of making a vow. He may be merely expressing a firm resolution to do something.

To God alone can a vow be made. Sometimes indeed vows are made to saints. Yet in reality the vow is made to God. It is made in honor of the saint.

Sometimes persons doubt whether they made a vow or a promise. If they intended to place a grave obligation of conscience upon themselves, their promise was a vow. Otherwise, it was a mere promise.

A vow is an act that belongs to the virtue of religion. Hence, a good work performed by vow contains twofold merit. It is good in itself. It is also an act of virtue.

Vows may be private or public. A vow made without the intervention of ecclesiastical authority is a private vow. A vow made by the authority and sanction of the Church is a public vow. Such are the vows taken by religious.

Public vows may be solemn or simple. Both have the same binding force. The only difference is in the manner in which the Church accepts them. Some vows the Church declares solemn. Others she declares simple. This distinction becomes im-

portant when there is question of dispensing from vows.

There is never doubt as to whether a vow is solemn or simple. The person always knows what kind of vow he is taking. The nature of the vow has already been determined by the Church.

A solemn vow of chastity is taken in ordination to the Subdiaconate. Solemn vows are taken in many religious orders.

Vows may be temporal or perpetual. Temporal vows bind only for a specified time. Perpetual vows bind until death.

Only those who have the use of reason can make a vow. To make a vow a person must have the intention to bind himself in conscience. For this he must have the use of reason.

A child seven years of age might make a valid vow. However, those who make religious vows must be, at

least, sixteen years old. Otherwise, the vows would not be valid. This has been decreed by ecclesiastical law.

To make a valid vow a person must fully realize what he is doing. He must know the nature of a vow. He must understand its obligations.

A vow must be a promise to do something that is pleasing to God. Otherwise it would not be valid. There can be no vow to do evil. Nor can there be a vow to do something foolish or useless. It would be a sin to promise to do evil.

A vow must always be a promise to do a greater good. This means it must be better to do the thing promised than not to do it. However, the thing need not be absolutely better. It need only be better in reference to the person who makes the vow.

A person makes a vow to marry. In itself the state of celibacy is higher than the state of matrimony. Yet

perhaps this person was in danger of losing his soul in his present state. Marriage is necessary for him. Thus he has promised a higher good. His vow is valid.

A vow to do the impossible is invalid. No one can be obliged to do that which is impossible. For instance, a poor man vows to give a large sum of money. But he is a pauper. He can obtain no money. His vow is not valid.

We may make a vow to do even things that are binding upon us by precept. By this means a new obligation is assumed. There are then the obligation of the vow and the obligation of the precept.

A vow imposes an obligation on him who makes it. "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay: because the Lord thy God will require it. And if

thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin."[1]

We are bound by fidelity to keep all our promises. But fidelity to God is the virtue of religion. Hence, we are bound by the virtue of religion to keep our vows.

The obligation of fulfilling a vow may be grave or slight. A vow is, as it were, a private law which a person imposes upon himself. It may refer to grave matters. It may refer to slight matters. Again, a person may intend to impose a grave obligation upon himself. Or he may intend to impose only a slight obligation upon himself.

A grave obligation can not be imposed for a slight matter. For instance, a person could not bind himself under mortal sin to say a Hail Mary. However, a vow to say a

[1] Deuteronomy xxiii, 21.

Hail Mary every day for a year would probably entail a grave obligation.

Anything to which the Church attaches a grave obligation may be grave matter for a vow. Such are the Mass, fasting and Holy Communion.

Religious vows always impose a grave obligation. The obligation of the vow taken in Holy Orders is also always grave.

Personal vows bind only those who make them. *Real* vows, however, may also bind others. By a *real* vow is meant a promise to give something of material value. The heirs of a dead person are bound, in justice, to fulfil his *real* vows. This supposes that he has left means to do so.

For example, a man makes a vow to give a certain sum to charity each year for five years. After a year, he dies. He leaves ample means. His heirs would then be bound to give the sum for the ensuing four years.

CHAPTER IV

Cessation of Vows

SOMETIMES a vow may of itself cease to bind. The principal object may be removed. For instance, a man vows to make a pilgrimage to beg the restoration of his son's health. But in the meantime his son dies. He is no longer obliged to fulfil his vow.

The fulfilment of a vow may become impossible. Then it no longer binds. A rich man promises to build a church. Unexpectedly he becomes a pauper. He is no longer bound to fulfil his vow.

The object of a vow may become useless or even illicit. A man makes a vow to give a sum of money to a friend. But his friend has become a drunkard. He will use the money for drink. Here the vow no longer binds.

Vows may be annulled by the proper authority. The superiors of religious can annul all private vows made by their subjects after their solemn profession. The Pope can also annul these private vows of religious. For by his profession the religious binds himself in complete obedience to his superiors.

Private vows of religious may be solemn or simple. They may be mere internal vows. They may refer to matters to which they are bound by precept. Yet their superiors can annul them.

Religious superiors can only indirectly annul private vows of novices. They can annul them only in so far as they interfere with their religious probation. Vows made in the world are annulled by the religious profession. They are commuted into the religious vows.

A father can annul the vows of his

young children. This applies only to children who have not reached the age of puberty. This is the age of twelve years for girls and fourteen years for boys.

In case the father is dead, this right belongs to the guardian or paternal grandfather. This right does not belong to the mother. It belongs exclusively to the father or to the head of the family.

The husband may annul certain vows made by his wife. It matters not if the vows were made before marriage. He can annul vows that interfere with the regulation of his family. Such might also be a vow to give large alms.

A wife can also annul certain vows made by her husband. She can annul vows that interfere with her conjugal rights.

Certain vows offend the rights of others or of those who make them.

The Pope can annul such vows for all the faithful. The bishop can annul such vows for his own subjects.

Dispensation from vows is sometimes given. Then the vow no longer binds. A dispensation can only be given in God's name. It is the remission of an obligation that was taken before God.

Dispensation differs from annulment. Annulment may take place even against the will of the person who made the vow. But dispensation must be sought by the person who made the vow. There must be a just cause for a dispensation, otherwise the dispensation would not be valid. For it is given in the name of God.

The Pope can dispense from all vows. He can even dispense from the solemn vows taken in religion. Bishops and abbots can dispense from vows. However, there are vows reserved to the

Pope. From these bishops and abbots can not dispense.

Vows may also be commuted. Some other good work may be substituted for the obligation of the vow. This can only take place, however, according to the mind and authority of the Church.

Religious ordinarily make three vows. They are the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Sometimes these are taken at first as simple vows. They may be taken only for a time. Perhaps they are renewed every year. After a certain number of years solemn vows are taken.

These solemn vows are perpetual. They bind until death. They are the bonds of the religious profession. They bind the faithful soul to its God with the tenderest and the holiest bonds.

CHAPTER V

Oaths

AN OATH is the calling upon God to witness the truth of what we say. When we take an oath we call God to witness. We ask Him to testify that what we assert is true.

An oath presupposes belief in the existence of God. Those who do not believe in God can not take an oath proper.

It is permitted to take an oath for any reasonable cause. Christ indeed said: "But I say to you not to swear at all."[1] By these words Christ does not forbid the taking of oaths. Yet oaths are not desirable of themselves. They are necessary because of incredulity and lack of veracity amongst

[1] St. Matthew v, 34.

men. Christians should have such a reputation for truth that their simple affirmation would suffice. Then no oath would be necessary.

It is sinful to take oaths lightly and without just cause. The oath is the highest bond of fidelity amongst men. It invokes the truth of God to prove the truth of man.

It is always permitted to take oath in court. It is also permitted to take an oath whenever the form of law requires it.

Holy Scripture sanctions the taking of oaths. "And thou shalt swear: as the Lord liveth, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice."[2] St. Paul says: "For God is my witness."[3]

The Church has always permitted the taking of oaths. Indeed she often prescribes oaths. A bishop has authority to prescribe solemn oaths.

[2] Jeremias iv, 2.
[3] Epistle to the Romans i, 9.

Oaths may be assertory or promissory. An assertory oath calls upon God to witness the truth of something past or present. A promissory oath calls upon God to witness the truth of something future.

An oath may be such: "I swear that I am innocent." This is an assertory oath. Again, it may be of this kind: "I swear that I will pay the debt." This is a promissory oath.

Sometimes an imprecation is added to an oath. "I swear that this is true. May God destroy me if it is not." Another form is also used: "By my life, I swear."

The official form of oath contains an imprecation: "Thus may God help me and this His Holy Gospel." This form is used in ecclesiastical oaths. It is also used by civil authority.

An oath may call upon God only indirectly, thus: "I call heaven and

earth to witness this day."[4] Heaven and earth bear a special relation to God. Hence, it is calling upon God. Likewise, we may call upon God by invoking the angels and saints.

Oaths may be solemn or simple. When taken with any external solemnity, an oath is solemn. Such are oaths taken before the crucifix, with lighted candles, with the right hand elevated, or with hand upon the Bible. Oaths taken without these externals are simple.

All oaths bind essentially in the same manner. It matters not what the form may be. They all are a calling upon God to witness the truth.

Two things are necessary to make an oath valid. The person who swears must have the intention of taking an oath. Then a form of words that signifies an oath must be used.

We must tell the truth when we

[4] Deuteronomy xxx, 19.

take an oath. We must be morally certain that what we assert is true. For we are calling upon God to witness the truth of our assertion.

To assert under oath what we know to be false is a grave sin. It is the sin of perjury. It is a sin against the virtue of religion.

A promissory oath imposes an obligation. A person swears that he will do something. Or he promises to omit something. He is bound in conscience to keep his promise. Otherwise, he sins against the virtue of religion.

A promissory oath is false when the person who swears has no intention of keeping his promise. But to swear to do something impossible, illicit or useless does not impose an obligation. It is not a valid oath.

There can be no valid oath to do wrong. God can not and will not bind us to perform evil. Hence, an oath to do evil is not binding. It is a

double sin. It is the taking of a sinful oath and a sinful purpose to do wrong.

A man takes an oath to murder another. He is asking God to bear witness to his crime. It is an insult to God. It is unreasonable to suppose that such an oath could be binding.

Oaths cease to bind in the same manner as vows. Conditions may change. The thing promised may become illicit or impossible. The object for which the oath was made may disappear. For example, a man swears that he will liberate a certain captive. But in the meantime the captive is set free. There is no longer an object for his oath.

Promissory oaths may be annulled. Dispensation may also be granted from them. They may be commuted. In this, oaths follow the rules laid down for vows.

Perjury of its very nature is a grave sin. It is an insult to the veracity

of God. It is a sin of contempt for God. It is always a grievous sin.

Adjuration differs from the oath. Adjuration is an invocation of God intended to induce others to do or omit something. It is generally intended to strengthen a command or a petition. The high-priest said: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ the Son of God."[5]

Adjuration is an act that belongs to the virtue of religion. It does not impose any obligation. It is intended to move the one adjured.

Adjuration is licit under certain conditions. Yet it should be used only in the cause of truth. It should only be used to require something licit. It must be reasonable. It should be used only in case of necessity or utility. It should always be used with due reverence for God's Holy Name.

[5] St. Matthew xxvi, 63.

Subjects of foreign countries may take the oath of allegiance to their adopted country. They may have taken the same oath at home. Yet it was a limited oath. It was understood that they might later take the oath of allegiance to another country.

It is not permitted to take oath upon a protestant version of the Bible. A Catholic Bible should be demanded. Otherwise, the oath should be taken without a Bible.

CHAPTER VI

The Third Commandment

"REMEMBER thou keep holy the Sabbath day."[1] This is the Third Commandment.

God demands that one day of each week shall be set aside for public worship. The Old Law named the seventh day as the day of worship. It is called the Sabbath.

The Apostles made Sunday the day of worship. This they did in honor of Christ's resurrection. For Christ rose from the dead on Sunday.

Since Apostolic times Sunday has been the Christian day of worship. The Church has also instituted other feast-days of obligation. They are called holydays. They are celebrated

[1] Exodus xx, 8.

to commemorate certain great mysteries of our holy Faith. We are bound to sanctify these holydays as we sanctify Sunday.

All that have reached the use of reason are bound to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays. This is a grave obligation. To neglect it is a mortal sin.

To hear Mass a person must be corporally present. He need not be near enough to hear the words of the priest. He need not even see the priest if this is practically impossible. He is one of a throng that have come to hear Mass. He follows the signs. He hears the consecration bell. He is one of a congregation assisting at Mass.

Ordinarily, to hear Mass the person should be inside the church. However, there may be a large crowd extending out into the street. Those who are on

the edge of this crowd are present. They fulfil the precept of hearing Mass.

To hear Mass a person must be present from the beginning to the end of the Mass. Those who miss a notable part of the Mass do not fulfil the precept to hear Mass.

Sometimes people go late for Mass. Those who come in at the Preface or leave at the Pater Noster certainly do not fulfil their obligation to hear Mass. All should be at Mass on time. They should remain until the priest has left the altar. This is the meaning of the precept to hear Mass.

To fulfil the precept of hearing Mass a person must give at least some attention to the Mass. He may follow the prayers of the Mass. He may follow the actions of the priest. Or he may simply busy himself with prayer or meditation.

Sacristans, organists and singers hear Mass even though they do not attend

strictly to what is taking place. Ordinarily, they follow at least in a vague manner.

A person who sleeps during the principal parts of the Mass does not hear Mass. To hear Mass a certain amount of external attention is necessary.

A person may be distracted during Mass. His distractions may last throughout the whole Mass. Yet in some vague manner he has followed the Mass. Hence, he has fulfilled the precept to hear Mass.

The obligation to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays is from God. The Church has authority from God. She defines God's positive precept to sanctify certain days of worship.

To sanctify the Lord's day it is not enough merely to hear Mass. We must observe the whole day as a day of worship. We must spend it especially in the worship of God. We must

abstain from servile works. We must, in a word, dedicate the day to God.

It may indeed be an obligation in conscience for many to attend a sermon or instruction. This obligation does not arise from the Third Commandment. It arises from the natural law by which we are bound to know God.

Christian piety suggests that we attend Vespers or other devotions on Sundays and Holydays. These days should be spent in prayer and good reading.

To be careless about the devotions of the Church may easily lead to indifference. It may also give scandal to others.

It is a mortal sin to neglect Mass on a Sunday or Holyday. Wilfully to miss Mass on the days appointed is to break a grave precept of the Church.

The number of Holydays of obligation is not the same in all countries. In the United States, there are six

Holydays. They are called feasts of precept. They are Holydays of obligation. They are days which we are bound to sanctify.

The Holydays are: The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, December 8; the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas, December 25; the Feast of the Circumcision, January 1; the Feast of the Ascension. This is a movable feast. It occurs on Thursday, forty days after Easter. The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated August 15. The Feast of All Saints is celebrated November 1. These are the six Holydays of obligation.

CHAPTER VII

Servile Works

SERVILE works are forbidden on Sundays and Holydays. All works that are intended especially for our material life are called servile works. They serve for the welfare of the body alone.

God commanded us to sanctify certain days to Him. He wants us to devote these days to our spiritual welfare. He wants us to lay aside, as far as possible, our material cares on these days.

Sunday is called the Lord's day. It is consecrated to God. It is set aside for His service. So also are the Holydays of obligation.

We are forbidden to perform servile works on Sundays and Holydays. This

means the whole natural day. It means from midnight to midnight.

All manual labor is considered servile work. Certain domestic duties are considered servile works. Such are washing, ironing, baking, sewing and the like. Other domestic duties are considered necessary. They are cooking, sweeping, washing dishes and the like.

Court proceedings and trials are forbidden on Sunday and Holydays. This includes the taking of testimony, making pleas, passing sentence.

All mechanical work is forbidden. However, public service often demands such work on Sundays and Holydays.

Indeed there is much servile work that has become necessary on Sundays and Holydays. Railroads and electric railways must operate. Men are obliged to work. In the same manner waterworks, heating-plants must be kept in order.

Public works have boilers, engines and furnaces. These must be cared for at all times. Thus men are obliged to work every day in the week.

Men are obliged to provide for their families. They are hired at public works. They are not free to stop work at will. Thus they are often obliged to do even unnecessary work on Sundays.

Christian men would gladly attend to their Christian duties on Sundays and Holydays. But they belong to the modern industrial system. They must adapt themselves as a cog to a wheel. Hence, they can only do their best. As far as possible they arrange their work so as to be able to sanctify the Lord's day.

Holydays are more difficult to observe in non-Catholic countries. They are not recognized by public authority. Works proceed as on other days. At best, the workman can only attend an

early Mass before he goes to his work.

It is forbidden to engage in mercantile work on Sundays and Holydays. Places of business should be closed on these days.

Some lines of trade are considered necessary on Sunday. Drug stores, restaurants, bakeries and sometimes meat shops must be kept open to accommodate the public. Custom seems to sanction other business. Confectioneries and cigar stands are sometimes kept open.

It is permitted to do works of art on Sunday. Such would be art-painting and sculpture. These are not considered servile works. Sculpture, however, might entail great manual labor. Then it would be forbidden.

All servile work is forbidden on the Lord's day. It is also a sin to oblige others to perform servile work on forbidden days.

To perform servile work on for-

bidden days is not always a mortal sin. To work less than two hours would not exceed a venial sin. But it may be necessary work. It may be work that must be done. Then there is no sin.

Work may be necessary because of the public good. It may be public work. It may be something done to assist our neighbor in grave necessity. It may be absolutely necessary for the support of our own life.

Work may be necessary to guard against great loss. A bridge may be falling. It may be necessary to repair it at once. A river may be breaking its banks. It may be necessary to build levies.

It may even be necessary to harvest on Sunday. Crops may be in danger of ruin. It may be necessary to gather them at once.

Thus the command to avoid servile works is reasonable. It regards man's

necessities. Yet it leaves no excuse for negligence. It is a positive precept to maintain the sanctity of the Lord's day.

It is also forbidden to devote Sunday to public games and sports. These things are not in keeping with the sanctity of the Lord's day.

Sundays and Holydays of obligation should be spent in a quiet and devotional manner. Games and amusements disturb the peaceful character that belongs to days of worship.

The faithful should devote the Lord's day exclusively to the worship of God. They should spend it in prayer, meditation and good reading. Thus they show their love for God.

CHAPTER VIII

The Fourth Commandment

"HONOR thy father and thy mother."[1] This is the Fourth Commandment.

Children owe their parents love, reverence and obedience. They must love them as the authors of their lives. They must revere them as their superiors. They must obey them. For God has placed parents over children to rule them in His name.

Children should love their parents with both internal and external love. They should have true affection for them. They should seek to protect their parents from evil. They should show them every mark of kindness. They should comfort them in their

[1] Exodus xx, 12.

sorrow. They should help them in their trials. They should support them in their need.

Parents may have personal defects. They may not always show consideration for their children. Yet they always deserve love and kindness. "Honor thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother. Remember that thou hadst not been born but through them; and make a return to them as they have done for thee."[2]

Children should show reverence for their parents. They should show them both internal and external reverence. It is not enough to feel respect for them. But by word and deed they should pay them reverence. They should acknowledge them as their superiors. For they are such by nature.

Not all parents are cultured and educated. They may not have had opportunities. They may be unpol-

[2] Ecclesiasticus vii, 29, 30.

ished and simple-minded. They may have given their children better opportunities for culture than they themselves received. For this reason children should show even more reverence for them. They should always be proud of their parents. They should be gentle with them in their simplicity. They should condone their faults and shortcomings. They should revere them before the whole world.

Children sometimes rise to high position. Their parents remain in the simplicity of their former lives. Yet such children should always revere their parents. They should always consider them good enough to meet all the friends of their higher station. "Cursed be he that honoureth not his father and mother: and all the people shall say: Amen."[3]

Children should obey their parents in all things lawful. "Children, obey

[3] Deuteronomy xxvii, 16.

your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord."[4]

Children should never do evil at the command of their parents. They would be bound to resist their parents should they command them to do something sinful.

Children are bound to obey their parents as long as they are under their authority. Ordinarily, children are supposed to attain their majority when they are twenty-one years of age. Females generally attain their majority about the age of eighteen. They are then said to be of age. They are then considered free to follow their own counsel. The time for attaining majority is fixed by civil law.

Parents may free their children from parental authority. This they are supposed to do when they permit them to marry under age.

[4] Epistle to the Colossians iii, 20.

Children often remain under the parental roof after they have reached their majority. They have "become of age." Whilst they are under the parental roof they are still bound to a certain obedience. They are bound to obey their parents in all that pertains to domestic order. They are always bound to listen to their advice and counsel.

When children marry they are freed from filial obedience. They then establish a new family. There another jurisdiction begins. The parents must respect the authority of this new family. They should not interfere with its rule.

It is a grave sin to treat parents with insult or injury. It is also a grave sin to mock or deride them seriously. Then, too, it is a grave sin to despise them.

It is a sin to show disrespect for parents. To strike a parent mali-

ciously is a twofold grave sin. It is a sin against justice and piety. This sin was punished by death in the law of Moses: "He that striketh his father or mother, shall be put to death."[5]

It is a grave sin against charity and piety to curse a parent. This was also a capital offense in the Old Law. "He that curseth his father, or mother, shall die the death."[6]

To disobey parents in serious matters is a mortal sin. Thoughtlessness may sometimes lessen the sin. Then again, the parent may not intend to give a strict command. This would also lessen the guilt of disobedience.

Children sometimes thoughtlessly show disrespect or disobedience to their parents. They hurt their feelings. It is then an act of filial love to beg their pardon. Then a promise to

[5] Exodus xxi, 15.

[6] Exodus xxi, 17.

avoid the fault in the future is a great consolation for parents.

The habit of disobedience is a serious fault. It shows a lack of filial piety. It often leads children to disaster. It grows upon them. They do not profit by the guidance and advice of their parents.

The formal sin of disobedience implies contempt for the command or for the one that commands. Hence, it is a grave sin when there is question of a serious command.

Children are free to choose their state in life. After they have reached the proper age they may decide for themselves. They may marry. They may select the clerical state, or they may enter religion.

Those who decide to marry should ask their parent's advice. Those who select the religious or the clerical state should ask advice from their pastor.

By natural right children may choose their state in life. Parents who oppose them unjustly in this, sin grievously.

However, parents may be in grave necessity. They may be destitute. They may need the assistance of their son or daughter to enable them to procure the bare necessities of life. Then the son or daughter should remain to help them.

The law of nature demands that children help their parents in their necessities. A vow that would offend this obligation of nature can not be binding.

A person is bound by fraternal piety to help his brothers or sisters in their necessity. Yet the obligation is not so grave as that of helping his parents. For this he would not be obliged to leave religion after he had been professed. Fraternal love, however, would suggest that he postpone his entrance

into religion until he has helped his brothers or sisters in their necessity.

Children may be obliged to assume certain personal obligations of their parents. A parent may die and leave debts. He may have left means to his children. They would then undoubtedly be obliged to pay the debt. But the parent may have left them nothing. Then they would not be obliged to pay the debt. They may, however, do so out of love for their parent.

Children must love, respect and obey those who take the place of parents for them. Orphans should treat their guardians or their foster-parents as they would their true parents.

The bond between child and parent is the tenderest bond on earth. The love that exists between them resembles the love of God for us. Filial

love makes the heart true. Filial reverence makes a loving character. Filial obedience prepares the soul for guidance and wisdom in later life.

CHAPTER IX

Duties of Parents

PARENTS must love their children. They must provide for their spiritual and bodily welfare. The obligation of love remains until death. The other obligations cease when the children have grown to manhood and womanhood.

Love demands that parents treat their children with great kindness. They must ward off every evil from them. They must show them meekness. They must correct them with patience and forbearance.

It would be a grave sin for parents seriously to maltreat their children. Nor should they ever expose to strangers their secret faults. Nor should they punish them with too much severity.

It is the duty of parents to procure the corporal wellbeing of their children. They must provide food, clothing and habitation for them. They must care for their health and comfort. They must raise them up to take their station in life.

Children may become perverse. They may waste what has been given to them. Yet their parents are obliged to provide for them. This obligation extends to the time when they are able to provide for themselves.

A mother's duty to her child begins at its very conception. She must guard its foetal life. To do this she must take proper care of herself. She must avoid all bodily dangers that might injure her unborn child.

Ordinarily, a mother is bound to nurse her own child. It is a duty imposed upon her by nature. She should never fail in this duty without a serious reason.

Parents have the same obligation toward all children born to them. They are bound to show them love. They are bound to provide for their corporal and spiritual welfare.

Parents should prepare their children for their state in life. They should, if possible, provide material means for them. They should send them to school. They should give them all the mental training possible. At least, they should give them all the education necessary for their duties in later life. They should train them up to be good citizens of their country. They should prepare them for some work in life. They may perhaps give them an opportunity to learn a trade. Perhaps they will fit them to enter a profession. Perhaps they will train them for a business career. In all cases they should strive to make them useful members of society.

Parents are bound to procure the

spiritual wellbeing of their children. They must provide religious instruction for them. They must set them a good example. They must warn them against evil. They must especially guard their innocence and purity.

It is properly the duty of parents to instruct their children in religion. In our day this duty is often left to others. The children are turned over to priest and school for their religious instruction. Yet the duty of imparting religious instruction devolves primarily upon parents. It is a duty imposed upon them by God.

The home is the first school of religion. The Catholic school is a place of true religious training. Here the work begun in the home is completed.

Parents begin the religious training of their children at a very early age. They should teach them their prayers as soon as they are able to talk. Then

in their tender years they should begin to instil into them the great truths of religion.

When possible, children should be sent to a Catholic school. Here they dwell in an atmosphere of religion. Their text-books are free from all dangers to the Faith. They are guided by religious teachers.

In the Catholic school religion is taught. It is the better side of education. The mind is trained in knowledge. But the soul is also trained in virtue and Faith. A religious character is engendered.

Children attend a Catholic school. Day by day they study their Catechism there. Often they are taken to Mass in a body. Their teachers encourage them to attend church. Yet this does not relieve parents of their obligation. They are still bound to procure the spiritual welfare of their children. They must, at least, see that

they study their Catechism well. They must see that they say their morning and evening prayers. Indeed it is a beautiful practice to have family prayers.

Parents should see that their children attend to their religious duties. This obligation can not be shifted to others. Parents can do most by their good example. They should take their children with them to Church. They should kneel often with them at the altar-rail. There the same God enters into the breast of parent and child alike. Children that have this blessing almost necessarily become strong and devout Christians.

Parents should never send their children to heretical schools. It matters not if these be higher schools and colleges. There is great danger there. The very spirit of the place is opposed to the Faith. Indifference, unbelief and error dwell there. Many promis-

ing youths have lost their Faith in these circumstances.

There is great danger for children even in our public schools. Religion is not taught in them. Their whole system of education is confined to the things of this world. Here the child is prepared for getting on in the world. He is trained as if he possessed no immortal soul. He is educated as if he had no obligation toward God.

The public schools are good in their own sphere. Many noble men and women devote their lives to them. Many teachers love God. They are filled with religion, perhaps. Yet this does not change the system. It is materialistic in its very nature.

There are many places in which there is not a Catholic school. Here parents send their children to the public school. They are then bound, in a special manner, to instruct their children in religion. They should teach

them their Catechism. They should see that they attend regularly the instruction given by the priest. They should provide Catholic books and periodicals for their children. Thus they may counteract the influences of indifference.

The Church teaches that religion is a necessary part of education. Religion is the most important concern of our lives. It is not a matter for Sunday only. Religion must permeate our whole lives. It must regulate our lives and actions.

The Church demands a religious education for her children. She warns parents against schools from which religion is excluded.

The Catholic school is one of God's great blessings. It is a necessity in modern life. It enables parents to fulfil their grave obligation of raising up their children to God. In the Catholic school the spirit of religion

prevails. The teachers are religious. They have given up their homes and the world out of love for God's little ones. In meekness and patience they teach them. By their lives they show them the power of God's love.

The motive of the Christian teacher's life is unselfish love. He sees the image of God in every child. He has learned the secret of Christ's words: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."[1]

[1] St. Matthew xxv, 40.

CHAPTER X

Employer and Employee

THE employer is bound to treat his employee as a man. He must respect his feelings. He should as far as possible provide steady employment for him. He must not overburden him with work. He must treat him with fraternal kindness. "If thou have a faithful servant, let him be to thee as thy own soul: treat him as a brother."[1]

Employers are bound to protect the health and life of their employees. They must do everything possible to provide for their safety. They must make their working places sanitary. They must do all in their power to guard against fires, explosions and other dangers.

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxxiii, 31.

It is a grave sin carelessly to expose laborers to danger. Those who wantonly expose the lives of others are guilty of murder. Employers sometimes neglect to care for the bodily welfare of their employees. Some generally suffer death or injury because of their criminal neglect. Such employers are bound to make restitution for the injury caused.

Employers should demand only a reasonable number of hours for a day's work. The laborer should have time to devote to his family. He should have leisure to cultivate his mind according to his condition. He should have time to worship God.

Eight hours would seem to constitute a reasonable workday. Modern labor is arduous. Men must often work like machines. Ordinarily, eight hours' work is all that they should be required to bear.

The employer must pay a just price

for the labor he employs. The lowest possible price is not just. A just wage is one that permits the laborer to provide for his family. It should enable him to educate his children. It should be sufficient to provide for him in times of ordinary sickness. It should do more than merely keep hunger from his door.

The employer forms a compact with his laborers. They produce wealth for him. He should give them an honest part of their product. He should be generous with them. His first concern should be to see that they are well paid for their labor.

"Let it then be taken for granted," says Pope Leo XIII, "that workmen and employer should, as a rule, make free agreements. And in particular should freely agree as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of nature more imperious and more ancient than any bargain between man

and man; namely, that the remuneration must be sufficient to support the wage-earner in reasonable and frugal comfort. If through necessity or fear of worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions, because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice."[2]

There should be a special bond between employer and employee. The employer depends upon his employees for his gain. He can do nothing without them. They serve him. They wear out their strength and their lives for him. It is but proper, then, that he should be just and kind to them.

The employer must respect all the rights of those who labor for him. God has given them these rights. They have a right to life and health. They

[2] Encyclical on the Condition of the Working Classes, 1891.

have a right to a share of the earth's treasures. They have a right to be treated as men.

The employer should guard the rights of his employees. He should not allow them to be exploited. He should insure them personal liberty. He should not permit undue competition of labor.

The employer's "great and principal duty is to give everyone a fair wage. . . . wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this, that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud anyone of wages that are his due is a crime which cries to the avenging anger of heaven."[3]

The employer should keep his contracts with his men. He should pay

[3] Pope Leo xiii, Encyclical on the Condition of the Working Classes, 1891.

them on the day appointed. He should permit them to spend their money where they will.

The employer should never coerce his men to deal in his stores. He has no right to discriminate against those who buy their merchandise elsewhere. He should not try to win back the wages he has paid out.

The work should always be suited to the person who is to perform it. Women should not be given the work of a man to do. Children should not be employed in hard labor. Their tender years should be taken into account.

Wise laws have been made of late years. These limit the work that may be done by women and children. They forbid the employment of young children. They limit the number of hours women and children may work. These laws are just and wise. They bind in conscience.

The laborer must do honest work for his employer. He must respect his property. He must strive to promote his employer's welfare.

The laborer must abide by the contract he has made to work for his employer. He must fulfil all its conditions. Yet the conditions of a contract may prove to be unjust. Then he is not bound to observe the contract.

A laborer may be driven by necessity to accept an unjust wage. He is thus suffering injustice. He may seek relief in any legitimate way whenever the opportunity presents itself. For he was forced by necessity into the contract.

Laborers may unite for the betterment of their condition. They may form labor organizations. They bargain collectively with their employers. Thus they often obtain a more just wage. They obtain better working conditions.

In itself the labor union is good and

useful. In union there is strength. It is a safeguard against the exploitation of labor. Yet workingmen should elect good, honest men as leaders of their unions. They should see that only lawful means are used.

The labor union has a noble mission. It protects the individual workingman against possible greed and injustice. It bars undue competition. No man, because of his need, is bound to work for a smaller wage. The union insures an equal wage for all that perform the same labor.

Disputes often arise between employer and employee. Generally the workmen try to reach a settlement by conference with their employer. They try to prove to them the justice of their claims. Finally, however, they may be forced to strike. Thus only, perhaps, can they attain their just demands.

Strikes are lawful when justly instituted. It is permitted to strike for just wages. It is permitted to strike for better working conditions. It is permitted to strike for proper working hours. It is permitted to strike as a protest against unjust treatment. It is permitted to strike for any just cause.

The sympathy strike is open to abuse. It is often unjust. Yet there may be some relation between the two bodies that are striking. They may be employed by the same company. They may be moved by a sincere desire to help their fellow-workmen. They may feel that they are bound to protest against an injustice.

Strikes may be unlawful. Unjust demands may be made. Violence may be done. They may arise from motives of ill will and hatred. They may be intended merely to cause loss to

the employer. In these cases strikes are unlawful and sinful.

Workingmen generally make a contract for a certain term with their employers. The terms of this contract may be fair and just. If the employers live up to its conditions, then a strike would be unjust. No strike could be justly instituted until the contract expired.

However, the conditions of the contract may be unjust. Again, the employer may fail to observe the conditions of the contract. Then the men may strike. They need not wait until the contract expires.

The individual workman may be sometimes forced into an unjust strike. He may see the injustice done. Yet he is not a leader. He has not the power to change the situation. He is bound to stand by the decisions of the majority. His good name depends upon his action. Perhaps his very livelihood de-

pends upon it. But he does not consent to the injustice. Hence, he is not guilty of sin.

Great is the responsibility of those who employ labor. They must answer to God for their grave charge. Happy are they if they always treat their workmen with justice and kindness. Thus only can they be true Christians.

Labor is noble. The laborer should be the honored of all men. He is a most useful member of society. He is in a special manner a brother to the Carpenter of Nazareth.

CHAPTER XI

Obligations of Husbands and Wives

MATRIMONY imposes certain obligations. By matrimony the family is formed. It is a domestic society.

Husbands and wives are bound to give each other companionship, love, help and conjugal fidelity. They must dwell together. They must love each other. They must help each other. They must be true to each other.

The husband is not permitted to be long absent from his wife. He may not undertake long journeys or pilgrimages against her will.

Love must exist between husband and wife. They should sustain each other in trial and misfortune. They should care for each other in sickness.

They should be a comfort to each other in sorrow. They should be companions at all times.

Husband and wife should guard against the sin of hatred. They should avoid jealousies and suspicions. They should beware of quarrels and harsh words.

Husband and wife must be faithful to each other. They must be true in thought and deed. They should, even in thought, avoid familiarity with others.

The husband is the head of the family. He is the ruler of the household. He is the king of the home. The wife is his companion. She is his equal. She is the queen of the home.

The husband is bound under penalty of sin to provide for his wife and family. He must guard and protect the house. He must treat his wife as his helpmate. He must respect her feelings. He must honor her.

The husband must provide suitable clothing for his wife. He must see that she is adorned in keeping with her state. He should give her every consideration that love can suggest.

The husband should be interested in the duties and cares of his wife. He should assist her to attend to her religious duties. He should help her in the education of the children. He should remove every danger from her.

The wife is bound to obey her husband in all that pertains to the government of the family. This is not the obedience of an inferior to a superior. It is the obedience of love. It is rather assent to counsel.

The husband should consult with his wife. He should ask her advice. He should talk matters over with her. Yet his counsel must prevail. He is the head of the family.

The Christian husband will never domineer over his wife. He will never

be a tyrant to her. He will show her every consideration. He will remember her dignity. He will not ask her to do the unreasonable.

St. Paul lays down the rule: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as it behoveth in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter towards them."[1]

[1] Epistle to the Colossians iii, 18.

CHAPTER XII

The Fifth Commandment

The Fifth Commandment is: "Thou shalt not kill."[1] Thus God commands us to respect human life. God is the Author of life. He has dominion over our lives.

Life is a gift of God to us. It is a gift worthy of an Omnipotent God. We must guard it. We must preserve it. Otherwise, we offend God.

We are bound to protect our own life and health. We must use ordinary care in this. We must also guard against mutilation and injury.

Needlessly to expose our life to danger is to invite death. It is a grave sin.

A person may be critically ill. He

[1] Exodus xx, 13.

refuses the remedies offered him. They are ordinary remedies. There is a well founded hope that these remedies will cure him. By refusing them he is needlessly exposing himself to death. He commits a grave sin.

Yet a person is not bound to take an extraordinary remedy. It may cause him excessive pain. He is not bound to undergo a serious surgical operation. He is perhaps not bound to submit to the amputation of a limb. These are all considered extraordinary means of preserving our life.

Major surgical operations are indeed common in our day. Yet many persons have a dread of them. This very dread makes them an extraordinary means of preserving life for many. Modesty perhaps makes some operations repulsive. They would then be an extraordinary means of preserving life.

Certain persons may be obliged to

use extraordinary means of preserving their life. Such would be serious operations, amputations and the like. Such are persons who have grave obligations toward others. They may have the care of a family. They may be necessary for the common good.

Under certain conditions a father may oblige his child to undergo a serious operation. Likewise a religious superior may bind a subject. But there must be moral certitude that the operation will be successful. Then the sick person must be necessary, in some sense, to others.

God commands us to take care of our own life. The person who destroys his own life commits suicide. It is a grave sin. The suicide destroys the life God has given him. He sins against the justice of God. He sins against charity to himself. He insults the supreme dominion of God.

The Church abhors the sin of suicide.

Suicides are refused Christian burial. However, there are those who take their life in a fit of insanity. Others are demented. If this is certain they may receive Christian burial.

Suicides sometimes live for a time after their rash act. They sincerely repent. Then they may receive Christian burial.

There may be a doubt whether or not a person is a suicide. The crime may have been either suicide or murder. There is no clear evidence. Then the unfortunate receives the benefit of the doubt. He is given Christian burial. For the abhorrent crime of suicide is not lightly imputed to anyone.

Some have brought death upon themselves by indirect means. They have needlessly exposed themselves to danger. They have done things which they knew would ordinarily bring about death. Thus they have intended their own death. They are guilty of suicide.

No cause is sufficient to justify suicide. No shame, fear or ignominy can justify this awful crime.

Saints have indeed rushed to death. Some have leaped into the flames enkindled by cruel persecutors. Some died to preserve their chastity. Others desired martyrdom. Samson pulled down the pillars of the building. He caused his own death. Yet all these things are done by divine inspiration.

It is sometimes allowed to do something though it is foreseen that death will almost certainly follow. Yet there must be a very grave cause for this. It must be done for some great public or private good. The soldier rushes out in the midst of shot and shell to save the standard of his country. He is going to what seems certain death. Yet he is impelled by the common good. His intention is to save the flag. He does not intend to commit suicide.

A person may select between two

forms of death. He is in a burning building. The flames have already reached him. He leaps from a high window. He is merely trying to escape the flames. He does not commit suicide.

A soldier may set fire to a ship on which the enemy has entered. He knows it will cause his own death. Yet he intends the death of the enemy. His own death is indirect.

In time of shipwreck a person may give his life-belt to another. He intends to save another. He knows that he will perish in the sea. This is an act of noble virtue and heroism.

Ordinarily it is not permitted to do anything that will shorten our life. Yet is is permitted when there is just cause. Men engage in unhealthy work. They are exposed to flames and gases at mills and furnaces. They are exposed to dampness and injurious air

in mines. They know that this will shorten their lives. Yet it is work that must be done. They must earn a livelihood. Hence, it is permitted.

Pious persons sometimes undertake severe fasts and penances. These they perform for the honor of God. Such works must always be performed with prudence. They must always be based upon the mature advice of superiors and confessors.

There are many who shorten their lives by intemperance. They injure their health by their manner of eating and drinking. This is sinful. Their intemperance may lead them into immediate danger of death or serious disease. Then their sin would be grave.

Workmen sometimes expose themselves to great dangers. They are perhaps engaged in the structure of high buildings. Yet the work must

be done. They are permitted to engage in this hazardous work. Thus they earn their daily bread.

Others expose themselves to danger through rashness. They may seek notoriety. Some leap from high bridges. Others pass over great waterfalls in a barrel. Others perform on high towers. Others spend days or even weeks without food or drink. These are all guilty of sin. They are needlessly exposing themselves to death or injury.

A person may care for others afflicted with a deadly contagious disease. He may foresee that he will probably lose his life. Yet he is following the law of love: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."[2]

Life is given us upon earth. Yet our life belongs to God. We are here to serve God. Our earthly life is a time

[2] St. John xv, 13.

of probation. It is the means of obtaining eternal beatitude. It is a preparation for eternity. Hence, it is precious in the sight of God. We must guard it. We must use it according to God's holy will.

CHAPTER XIII

Mutilation

IT IS forbidden to mutilate the human body. Of itself, serious mutilation is a grave sin. Yet it is permitted for the sake of preserving life.

God possesses dominion over our life. He is also Master over our members. Yet we are the custodians of our bodies. We must preserve our bodies. A member of the body may become affected. We may suffer its loss to save the whole body.

A man's hand may be caught in machinery. He may have it cut off. Thus only, perhaps, can he save his life. Yet this would not be permitted to escape military service. He would commit a grave sin.

Saints sometimes mutilated them-

selves. They destroyed the beauty of their faces. They even crippled themselves. Yet this was always done by the inspiration of God.

Certain surgical operations are ordinarily forbidden. Any operation that renders a woman sterile is forbidden. Such would be the removal of the ovaries or the womb. Such would also be to bind up the fallopian tubes. Such operations would, however, be permitted to save a person's life. Otherwise they would constitute a grave sin of mutilation.

Modern materialistic thought has introduced the idea of "sterilization." It is a simple operation which renders men impotent. It is intended for defectives. Thus it is thought society is to be sterilized. The weakminded and the diseased are no longer to be permitted to propagate their kind.

Laws have even been made to enforce "sterilization." These laws are per-

haps a usurpation of God's prerogatives. God has given man certain rights. No human agency can take away these rights from him.

Another idea has become prevalent. It is the idea of eugenics. Men would fain produce a better race of men. They would have all undergo a physical examination before marriage. Then only the healthy and the strong should be permitted to marry.

Eugenics is a pagan idea. It is one of the conclusions drawn by materialistic thought. It bears no likeness to Christian ideas.

Eugenists compare men to cattle. They draw their arguments from the science of stock-breeding. Thus they would breed a better race of men.

Morality is the basis of goodness in man. Physical qualities are secondary. Some of our noblest characters have been physically defective. Cripples can be heroes. Invalids can be

saints. Dwarfs can be intellectual giants. The deformed may be a great genius.

Holy Church teaches the true purification of society. She promotes the true idea of a better race. She does this by teaching the doctrines of morality revealed by God.

Nations have followed the moral doctrines of Holy Church. They have regulated their lives according to her moral standards. Thus they have always become a superior race. They have been wondrously free from abhorrent diseases. They have had few real defectives. For they were pure.

Pagan ideas are bringing great evils upon the race. They are gnawing at the heart of society.

Holy Church prepares her sons and daughters for marriage. She teaches them to preserve their innocence. She teaches them to look upon their bodies as the temples of the Holy Ghost.

She teaches them that marriage is a holy state. She teaches them that they must answer to God for the life that He has given them. Thus the faithful are fitted for the duties and the responsibilities of married life. They procure the glory of God by this sacred union.

CHAPTER XIV

Murder and Homicide

GOD commands us to respect our neighbor's life. Unjustly to take another's life is a heinous crime. It is murder. By its very nature it is a mortal sin.

Murder is a sin against justice. Man has a right to live. But the murderer wrongfully takes away his life. He deprives another of his right to live.

To take another's life is homicide. It may be voluntary or involuntary. It may be direct or indirect. It may be just or unjust. Unjust, wilful homicide is murder.

Accidental homicide may sometimes be sinful. A person fires a weapon carelessly in the dark. He knows that people may be passing. He kills a

man. He is not entirely innocent of the death. He knowingly placed the cause.

It is never allowed to kill an innocent person. It is not even permitted public authority to put an innocent person to death. It is always an evil action. No public or private good can justify it. It is forbidden by divine law.

A man may be mortally wounded. He may be suffering great agony. He may have but a few hours to live. He may beg someone to put him to death. He may ask a doctor to end his life by chloroform. Yet it is forbidden. It would be murder to do it.

Another case may arise in shipwreck. Many persons are clinging to a small boat. There are too many for the little craft. To push one into the sea would save all. Yet it would be murder to do so. It would be a heinous crime. For all have a right to life.

Defectives and the deformed have a right to live. God gave them life. They have then a right to life. They have a right to all the means of preserving life.

Another kind of homicide has lately been proposed to society. It is called euthanasia. By this it is intended to rid the world of helpless and decrepit paupers. They are to be quietly murdered. They are said to be a burden to society.

It is appalling to know that even a few have adopted this abhorrent idea. It is too cruel and ghastly even for the pagan mind. Most men know the value of life. They look upon it as a God-given gift. They know that God alone is Master of life and death.

The duel is a single combat of two persons with deadly weapons. It is an arranged combat. The conditions are previously agreed upon.

Those who take part in a duel

commit a grave sin. They are willing to commit murder. They are prepared to lose their own life. This is equivalent to suicide.

Those who take part in a duel are excommunicated by the Church. The excommunication embraces the seconds and those who arrange the duel. Those who challenge to a duel are excommunicated. Likewise are those who accept a challenge. It matters not if the duel does not take place.

No cause is sufficient to make a duel licit. By refusing to accept a challenge a man may suffer great loss. He may lose honor, position and friends. Yet he is forbidden to enter a duel.

Thus we respect life in all men. We bow before the awful majesty of God. We acknowledge His supreme dominion over life and death.

CHAPTER XV

Capital Punishment and Self-Defense

PUBLIC authority is permitted to put certain criminals to death. The public good demands this. God has given human society the right to inflict capital punishment for certain crimes.

God gave human society authority to provide for the common good. To this end capital punishment is necessary. Nothing less than this can deter men from certain grave crimes. Such has been the experience of nations.

The right of capital punishment is vested in the State alone. It can not be exercised by any private authority. Even the State can only impose capital

punishment under certain conditions.

The State can not justly impose capital punishment for every crime. The crime must be truly grave. For capital punishment is the gravest penalty the State can impose.

The State can not impose capital punishment for an uncertain crime. The accused must be proved guilty beyond every reasonable doubt. He must be permitted to defend himself. This is a natural right which belongs to all. Then his guilt must be shown by legal process. It must be established according to the forms of law.

The condemned criminal has certain rights. He should be allowed some time to prepare for death. He should be given opportunity to receive the last Sacraments.

Police and public officials are not permitted to kill fleeing criminals. These may be escaped criminals who have been condemned to death. Yet the

guards or officers may not kill them without special authorization.

A criminal may be proscribed for death by public authority. A proclamation is given forth. The criminal is to be taken dead or alive. Then anyone may kill him. But the fugitive can not kill his pursuers. He can not even kill them in self-defense. Yet they have a right from the State to capture or even kill him.

Citizens sometimes wreak vengeance on certain criminals. This is called lynching. Private individuals usurp the prerogative of the law.

Lynching is a crime of homicide. Those who take part in it are guilty of a grave sin. It is forbidden to take part, even as a spectator, in this crime. Those who follow often lend encouragement to the crime by their presence.

No one is permitted to inflict corporal punishment upon another with-

out authority. A parent may use the rod on his child. Ordinarily, a teacher may inflict corporal punishment on a pupil. The teacher holds the place of a parent during school hours.

Homicide sometimes takes place in self-defense. A person may be unjustly attacked. He is permitted to defend himself against the unjust aggressor. If necessary he may take the aggressor's life. Thus only perhaps can he save his own life.

There are definite principles for going to this extreme lawfully in self-defense. The aggressor must be unjust. He must be one that has no right to attack. Then he must be in the act of making the attack.

The aggressor need not have assailed the person. He need not have shot at him. It is enough if he is actually about to make the attempt seriously to attack. He may reach for his weapon. He may be creeping upon

his victim with weapon in hand. These would morally constitute an attack.

Under the proper conditions anyone may defend himself against an unjust aggressor. He may even take his aggressor's life. It matters not who the aggressor may be. Anyone may defend himself against an insane person. He may defend himself against a demented or drunken aggressor. Such persons may not be responsible for their act. Yet anyone may defend himself against them.

No one is bound to kill an unjust aggressor. If he wish he may allow him to take his life. Yet a person may be bound to save his life for other reasons. He may be necessary for the public good. He may be in mortal sin. In these cases he would be bound to defend himself.

One person may defend another's life against an unjust aggressor. Charity may even bind him to save another's

life. He may even kill the aggressor when necessary. Yet this principle must be applied prudently.

Anyone may defend property against theft or unlawful destruction. If necessary he may kill those who attempt serious material injury to him.

It would not be allowed to kill a thief who was attempting a small theft. The loss must be serious. Otherwise it would not be permitted to go this awful extreme.

Certain losses are considered serious. To break into a house to rob and steal is always serious. To steal things that are necessary to sustain life is serious.

A thief may have seized the goods. They are things of great value. The owner calls at him to stop or to drop the goods. The thief refuses. Then the owner may attack him. He may even kill him. By this means alone can he recover his property. Yet he

must consider the serious consequences of his action. To kill should be the last resort.

Again, a thief may be carrying off goods of small value. Here the owner is not permitted to kill the robber to recover his goods. Yet he may demand his property even by force. But the robber may attack him. Then, if necessary, he may kill the robber in self-defense. Yet he must always strive to avoid this extreme. He should use all possible moderation.

A woman may defend her honor. She may even kill her assailant if necessary to repel his attack. Yet she is not bound to kill him. She is guiltless if she resists interiorly. She need only not consent to the sin.

A person may defend his limbs and members even at the cost of another's life. He may repel any unjust attack that will do him bodily harm. Here, as always, prudent forbearance is ad-

visable. When possible other means should be sought to escape the injury.

Never is a man permitted to kill another in defense of his honor. To destroy another's honor is indeed a great loss. Yet ordinarily honor can be defended by other means. It is never lawful to take a defamer's life. The Church has officially decided this question. She condemned the opposite opinion. She has declared that no man may defend his honor by taking his defamer's life. Under no circumstances is it permitted.

Modern courts sometimes condone the crime of murder. Appeal is made to the "unwritten law." Yet the "unwritten law" is but a cloak for vengeance. The crime of homicide has not righted the man's wrongs. It is but one crime added to another. It is the sin of murder.

Self-defense must always be carried out with prudence and moderation.

No one should ever take the life of an unjust aggressor unless it is necessary. He should use any other means available to avoid the injury. He sins against justice unless he acts from necessity.

It may be possible merely to frighten or wound an aggressor. Then this only should be done. It would then be unlawful to kill the aggressor. It may be possible to give an alarm or to flee. Thus the aggressor may be repelled. Then it is unlawful to kill him.

Time for thought is often wanting in an unjust attack. A man will often act on impulse. He may sometimes act rashly. But he acts in good faith. The excitement of the moment generally excuses him.

To take another's life, even lawfully, is always an awful deed. It excites horror in every Christian heart. In unjust aggression the intention is not to take another's life. It is only

intended to repel the aggressor. His death is never desired.

All Christian men know the sacredness of life. They consider the awfulness of God's dominion. Their hearts are right toward their fellowmen. They are thus prudent and moderate in the defense of their own life and property.

CHAPTER XVI

The Embryonic Life of the Child

BY a distinct act God creates a soul for every human being. The human body comes into existence by generation. At the moment of conception God creates a soul. He puts this soul into the body that is then conceived.

At first the human body is in a very imperfect state. Yet it possesses life from the very first moment. It is endowed with an immortal soul.

God has wondrously provided for the propagation of the human race. He creates new human beings by the aid of man.

God has given man the power to procreate his kind. To misuse this faculty is always a grave sin. To

interfere with the course of nature is also a grave sin.

God instituted marriage. He imposed upon the married the duty of propagating their kind. This is a grave duty. To interfere with the results of their relations is a sin akin to murder.

All means of direct prevention are gravely sinful. To interfere is to thwart the designs of God. It is to forestall a life. It is the breaking of God's positive law.

The child's life begins at the moment of conception. To destroy this life any time thereafter is a heinous crime. It may be but a few moments after conception has taken place. Yet it is a grave sin of homicide. It is the murder of a helpless and innocent victim.

Nor is it necessary to make sure that conception has taken place. It is enough if it could have taken place

under the circumstances. To use means to counteract this effect is a grave sin of homicide. The intention is to destroy life if life has come there.

The unborn child is called a foetus. It is often called an embryo until the fifth month. It may be mature or immature. It is mature when it is fully developed. It is then capable of life after birth.

To eject an immature foetus is called abortion. It is brought about by artificial means. These may be drugs or surgical operations.

Abortion is a sin of child-murder. It is always a grave sin. Those who procure abortion are excommunicated by the Church.

After the seventh month the foetus is considered mature. For a grave cause birth may then be hastened. The child's life can then be spared.

It is always permitted to remove a dead foetus. But it is not permitted

to do anything that will directly destroy life in a foetus. It is not permitted to remove a living foetus from a living mother if this would cause its death. This is not even permitted for the sake of baptizing the foetus. A living foetus should, however, be removed from a dead mother. It may then receive Baptism.

Certain surgical operations are forbidden. Craniotomy on a living foetus is murder. By this operation the life is crushed out of the unborn child. It is a revolting form of abortion.

Sometimes a trying situation arises. Both mother and unborn child face certain death. One or both must die. The mother can be saved by sacrificing the child. Then craniotomy is suggested. Yet even here it is not lawful. The Church has condemned it. It is always a crime of murder.

The suffering woman may be the mother of several small children. She

may be the dearly beloved wife of a devoted husband. Yet the good husband will not consent to the crime. He knows the law of God. He knows that it is never allowed to do evil that good may follow. He knows that it is not permitted to commit a murder to save even the devoted mother of his children.

There is a lawful operation that generally saves both mother and child. It is called the ceserean section. This operation may be the only hope of bringing forth a living child. Without it the child would probably die unbaptized.

God has given us a strict command to respect human life. The tenderer the life the tenderer should be our care for it. Thus the unborn child should receive the tenderest care. Its life should be guarded with the greatest fidelity.

CHAPTER XVII

War

WAR is a contest of arms undertaken by public authority. One army of men proceeds against another with deadly weapons.

War differs from sedition. Sedition is strife within a State. One body of men rises against another. They clash with deadly weapons. Yet the conflict is not undertaken by authority. Hence, it is a mob riot. It is a tumult.

Riots are grave evils. Those who take part in them are guilty of grave sin. They are often guilty of murder. They always disturb public order.

Men sometimes rise against their fellowmen. There may be a labor dispute. They resort to violence. This is a grave evil. It begets murder and

destruction of property. Besides, it generally injures the cause of those who enter into it. It often brings suffering and injustice upon them.

War may be defensive or offensive. Defensive war is undertaken to defend national rights. It is undertaken to repel attacks. Offensive war is undertaken to vindicate an injury. It may also be undertaken to recover possessions that have been seized. Sometimes it is waged for the purpose of acquiring new possessions.

Defensive war is always licit. The individual may protect his rights by force. Surely then the State possesses the same right.

Offensive war is licit under certain conditions. The war must be declared by the proper authority. There must be a just cause for the war. This cause must be grave. It must be waged with an upright intention. A grave injury may be inflicted by an-

other government. The injury must be righted. Otherwise war may be undertaken against that government.

The subjects of another government may injure the rights of a nation. That government should vindicate the wrong done by its subjects. Else war may be waged against it.

War is a terrible thing. It should never be declared without grave cause. It spreads death and destruction on all sides. The innocent suffer. Orphans and widows are left in destitution. Grave indeed is the responsibility of those who decide upon war.

Many causes might be given that justify war. There may be a revolution in a country. War may be necessary to reduce the rebels to subjection.

Provinces and possessions may have been seized. Here a nation is justified in going to war. It has a right to recover its property.

A nation may have suffered a grave insult. It is justified in vindicating its honor. It may declare war. Such was the war waged by David against the Ammorites. They had insulted and mistreated his legates.[1]

A nation may have waged an unjust war. Another nation has helped the unjust enemy. Then war may be undertaken against the ally of the unjust enemy. It is permitted to vindicate the evil done. Such was the war David waged against the Syrians. They had helped Adarezer, King of Soba, against him.[2]

Evil doers may deserve punishment. It may be of grave importance for the State to have them punished. Another government may give them refuge. It may refuse to surrender them. Then war may be undertaken to punish that government. It was for this

[1] 2 Kings x, 4-9.
[2] 2 Kings viii, 5.

cause the Israelites declared war against the Tribe of Benjamin. The men of Gaba had committed a heinous crime against one of the Israelites. The Benjaminites refused to deliver them up.[3]

A nation may have entered a solemn treaty with another. One nation violates this treaty. It causes grave loss and injury to the other nation. The injured nation may justly declare war against the other nation.

The Israelites waged a war of this kind. The King of Moab had made a league with them. When King Achab died the Moabites broke their treaty. The Israelites then declared war to vindicate their rights.[4]

There are certain privileges which belong to the rights of nations. These are sometimes unjustly refused. One of these is the right to pass unmolested

[3] Judges xx, 4-20.
[4] 4 Kings, iii, 4.

from one region to another. War may be undertaken to vindicate any of these rights.

The Amoabites refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their country.[5] St. Augustine says of this: "It is to be noted with what justice the Israelites waged war against the Amoabites. They refused them unmolested passage which should have been open to them by all right of human society."[6]

A nation may have made an alliance with other nations. It may have promised help if those nations should be invaded. This constitutes a just cause for war. A nation may help her allies.

Abraham waged war to help his allies. He had made a league with several kings. They were oppressed by the King of the Elamites. Abra-

[5] Numbers xx, 14-18.

[6] Quaest. In. Num. q. 44 ad cap. xx, Vol. iii col. 408-409 Antwerp 1700.

ham went out to battle and overcame the tyrant.[7]

War should be the last resort of a nation. Every other means should be tried to obtain justice. Diplomacy should be used to the utmost. Arbitration should be accepted if possible.

The ruler of a nation should not trust to his own judgment alone. He should seek the most prudent counsel. He should employ the most skillful statesmen. Then only should he decide upon war.

War should not be declared because of a probable wrong. The other nation may be in good faith. It maintains that it has justice on its side. The question should be thoroughly investigated. There must be certainty of injury before war can be declared.

An offending nation should be permitted to make reparation for injury. If it makes reparation, war should not

[7] Genesis xiv.

be instituted against it. But war may have already begun. Reparation is then offered. Here at least charity would suggest that the war should be stopped.

A sovereign undertakes war to recover lost possessions. He may justly demand more than was taken. He may justly require indemnity. He may justly impose tribute on the conquered nation.

The individual soldier should be prepared to fight only in a just war. If he is willing to fight whether the war is just or unjust, he is in the state of sin. For he is willing to commit an unjustice. Then he is bound to make restitution for the loss he may cause to others. Yet invincible ignorance may excuse him from this obligation.

In some cases the individual may assume that the war is just. He has no positive doubts on the justice of the war. He is a citizen of the warring

country. He has been drafted for service. The sovereign has always ruled with prudence and justice. Here he is not bound to make any special inquiries as to the justice of the war.

Volunteer soldiers are always bound to make sure that the war is just. A soldier who has freely entered an unjust war is in the state of sin. He is bound to resign the service as soon as possible. In the meantime, he must refrain from hostile actions. He should covertly direct his activities so as to injure no one.

Many things are forbidden in a just war. Non-combatants are to be spared. Such are women, children, old men, religious, travelers. Yet their external property may, at times, be taken. These things may be an adjunct to the hostile army. Then they may be taken. Yet the people should not be left destitute.

It is forbidden to kill non-combatants.

Yet their death may follow certain lawful actions. The town may be bombarded. Fire may have been started by shells. Then it is impossible, perhaps, to save them.

Churches are sometimes turned into barracks. Soldiers take refuge in them. This is not permitted except in case of grave necessity. In grave necessity the enemy may even destroy these sacred edifices.

Those engaged in a just war may use strategy and snares. It is understood that they will do all in their power to deceive the enemy. They may send spies into the ranks of the enemy. Yet direct falsehood must be avoided.

Josue laid an ambush for the city of Hai. This he did by the command of the Lord. He placed a large body of soldiers in hiding behind the city. Then he attacked it with a small force

on the other side. He then retreated. The enemy followed in pursuit. Then the soldiers took the city.[8]

It is never allowed to poison wells or springs. Nor is it allowed to infect water and food in any way that would cause death. This is a barbarous practice. It is contrary to the law of nations.

The enemy has certain rights that must be respected. Faith must be kept with him. However, a promise may have been forced by the enemy. Then it need not be kept. Again, circumstances may have changed since the promise was made. It might now cause great harm to the country. It might now be a great injury to religion. Here it need not be kept.

Captives may avail themselves of an opportunity to escape. But their captors may be waging a just war. They may have given them a solemn

[8] Josue viii, 2-7.

promise not to escape. Then they should keep faith with them.

Those who have been captured by unjust force may try to escape. They may even carry away booty.

It is not allowed to put hostages or prisoners to death. The enemy may have killed the hostages sent to them. They may have broken faith. Yet it is not lawful to kill their hostages. These are innocent.

It is not ordinarily lawful to sack and pillage a captured city. For very grave reasons, however, it may be permitted. Yet it is never lawful to do so on private authority. Of themselves the soldiers are not permitted to cause losses to the enemy. This would be vandalism.

Soldiers must respect the rights of those whom they meet in a hostile country. They may be obliged to lodge with private citizens. They meet others on the march. They are

not allowed to despoil these people. They may not even accept gifts that are offered through fear. They may indeed be moved by necessity to take provisions. Yet they must never go beyond the instructions of their commander-in-chief.

It is wrong for a soldier to flee unless all hope of victory is lost. It is worse still to be a deserter. Gravest of all is the sin of treason.

The citizens of one country some times do grave injury to those of another country. Their ruler refuses to do justice for their crime. It is certain that they are guilty. Their ruler admits the fact. Then the offended country may make reprisals.

They may invade the offending country. They may seize the property of the inhabitants. Thus they repair the loss they have suffered.

It is lawful to capture vessels of a hostile country. These are taken as

war prizes. The cargoes also belong to the captors.

Booty taken in war belongs to the State. Soldiers are not allowed to enrich themselves with plunder. However, the State may concede booty to them. Then they may rightly retain it.

Merchant vessels are sometimes destroyed at sea. There may be passengers aboard. These are non-combatants. The vessel should be warned before it is sunk. A reasonable time should be given the passengers and crew to save themselves.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Morality of War

WAR is filled with horrors. Cruelty, barbarism, inhuman slaughter, and desolation belong to warfare. Man is pitted against man. They set upon one another like furious beasts of the forest.

The best energies and ingenuity of nations are sometimes expended on engines of war. The more destructive the machine the more it is valued. Civilization does not seem to lessen the horrors of war.

It is strange that war can take place. Men in all ages have yearned for the time of universal peace. Yet that time has not yet come.

There are many evils in the world. Yet these evils all come from man.

We long for a life free from evil. God has prepared that life for us in heaven. There man will be confirmed in grace. There he can not bring evil upon himself and upon his fellowman.

There are many things in the world that are undesirable. There are injury, insult, murder. There are deceit, injustice and robbery. There is sickness and there is death. Then, too, there is war.

The most honest man may be robbed. The meekest may be insulted. The gentlest may be murdered. So the most peaceful nation may be attacked by a hostile nation.

It is not always possible to maintain peace by merely willing it. Peace depends not alone upon our own nation. It also depends upon the other nations of the world.

Peace is order. The man whose heart and conduct are in order with himself and with his fellowman and

with his God is at peace. The nation that is in order internally and with the rest of the world is at peace.

To establish virtue then is to establish peace. Religion alone can bring peace to the world. Did all men keep the Commandments of God there would be no murder. Were all nations governed by the spirit of Christ there would be no war.

Christ was styled the Prince of Peace. At His coming the angels sang: "Peace to men of good will."[1] He charged His disciples: "And when you come into the house, salute it, saying: Peace be to this house."[2] His parting message to His devoted followers bore the same burden. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."[3]

The Prophet Isaias indeed foretold

[1] St. Luke ii, 14.
[2] St. Matthew x, 12.
[3] St. John xiv, 27.

that Christ would bring peace "in the last days." "And he shall judge the Gentiles, and rebuke many people; and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war."[4]

Alas, this time has not yet arrived. God is patiently waiting for man to turn to Him. Christ is still pleading with the people: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart."[5]

Christ indeed said: "Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth; I came not to send peace, but the sword."[6] Christ is not here speaking of social problems. He is not speaking of war. He is telling His beloved disciples what the price of fidelity will be. He is referring to the sword of martyrdom.

[4] Isaias ii, 4. [5] St. Matthew xi, 29.
[6] St. Matthew x, 34.

Our Lord had just said: "Fear not . . . .Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will confess him before my Father who is in heaven."[7]

Christ here foretold the persecutions His faithful followers would suffer. He referred to the opposition they would meet from the world. He had in prophetic view the countless thousands of martyrs that would confess Him boldly before men. This is the sword that He had brought.

Christ did not intend that His followers should compromise with the world. They should remain true to Him at any cost. They should not allow themselves to be turned away from Him. Not even mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, friends or princes should be able to make them deny Him.

For this reason He adds: "For I

[7] St. Matthew x, 31-32.

came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."[8]

Truly this took place. In the days of persecution sons and daughters were sometimes given to death by their own parents. In every age there are those who are outcasts from their home and friends because they embrace the Faith. But Christ had said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."[9]

Nor did Christ forbid war absolutely. He taught Christian meekness indeed. "Blessed are the meek," He says, "for they shall possess the land."[10]

Christ taught us to bear wrongs patiently. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake."[11]

[8] St. Matthew x, 35. [9] St. Matthew x, 37.
[10] St. Matthew v, 4. [11] St. Matthew v, 11.

Christ taught us to forgive all offenses. "For if you will forgive men their offences," says He, "your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences."[12]

Christ taught us not to resist evil. "You have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other."[13]

Christ is urging His disciples to Christian patience. He wants them to bear affronts and injuries patiently. He wants them to cast out the desire for revenge. This is virtually to "turn the other cheek."

Christ indeed commanded St. Peter to put up his sword. "Put up again thy sword into its place," He says,

[12] St. Matthew vi, 14.
[13] St. Matthew v, 38-39.

"for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword."[14]

St. Thomas explains these words of Christ. He quotes St. Augustine: "He takes the sword who without any superior, legitimate authority and without the command of a ruler permits himself to spill anyone's blood." Then he adds: "He that carries arms at the commands of a ruler . . . is not taking the sword but using the sword given him by another."[15] Thus Christ forbids men to take up the sword on their own private authority.

Peace indeed is the desire of Christ. Peace is the desire of the Church. Yet just war is not waged against peace. It is waged against evils. Those who carry on just wars are striving for peace. "Peace is not sought for the purpose of carrying on war," says St. Augustine, "but war is waged to acquire peace.

[14] St. Matthew xxvi, 52.

[15] Summa Theologica 2a, 2ae; quaest. xl, art. 1.

In waging war therefore, be a man of peace so that you when you conquer your enemy you may lead him to peace."[16]

The chosen people of God engaged in many wars. It would almost seem that they loved war. Yet they were lovers of peace. They possessed God's true Revelation. They entered only just wars.

The Israelites waged war to conquer the land of Chanaan. This land belonged to them by right. Then they fought many wars to maintain possession of their land. The kings of Asia and Egypt often attacked them. They were obliged to defend themselves.

God drew good out of the Hebrew wars. He was thus enabled to show His love and mercy and justice toward the chosen people in a special manner.

[16] Quoted in Summa Theologica 2a, 2ae; quaest. xl, art. 1 ad 3m.

Then He often intervened miraculously in their wars. This marked the Israelites as God's true people. It was intended to prepare their minds for the coming of the Messias.

The Israelites were governed by many laws in their wars. They were not allowed to kill women and children in battle. "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver it (a city) into thy hands, thou shalt slay all that are therein of the male sex, with the edge of the sword, excepting women and children, cattle and other things, that are in the city."[17]

They might take the women captives. They gave them a month's time to mourn their people. Then they took them for wives if they consented. Otherwise they gave them their liberty.[18]

They were forbidden to destroy

[17] Deuteronomy xx, 13-14.
[18] Deuteronomy xxi, 10-14.

fruit trees. They could cut down other trees only for defense.[19]

This was all in contrast to the practice of other nations at that time. The neighboring nations all practiced great cruelty. They themselves acknowledged the mercy of the Hebrew kings.

The Israelites indeed practiced great cruelty on several occasions. They undertook reprisals against their enemies. This they did in violation of their own laws.

God indeed foresaw that there would be murder and war amongst men. Yet He made men free. He gave them a law. Those who keep this law will never commit murder. However, they may be forced to defend themselves against a murderer.

Those who keep the law of God will never wage an unjust war. Yet they

[19] Deuteronomy xx, 19, 20.

may be forced to defend themselves against an unjust enemy.

Christ is truly the Prince of Peace. His Gospel teaches mercy, charity, forgiveness, patience, peace. It is in the Gospel of Christ alone that the world can hope to attain lasting peace. When all men are faithful to the teaching of Holy Church then all will be in order. Then will peace reign amongst all the nations of earth.

CHAPTER XIX

The Sixth and Ninth Commandments

THE Sixth Commandment is: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."[1] The Ninth Commandment is: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."[2] These two Commandments tend to the same end. Both demand purity of body and mind. Both demand fidelity and justice between man and wife.

God is all pure. Purity is the distinguishing mark of those who dwell with God. Purity is the badge of heaven. The angels are resplendent with purity. Not even the least shade of thought against purity can cross their angelic minds.

[1] Exodus xx, 14.
[2] Deuteronomy v, 21.

God draws all pure creatures to Himself. He loves them with a special love. They alone represent the unsullied work of His hand.

God created man innocent and pure. He fashioned him after Himself. Man is then a likeness of God. Hence, it is that God made him pure. He would have His divine likeness exist only in creatures that are pure.

God creates every individual soul by a positive act of His Omnipotence. At creation each soul is as pure as the angels.

God puts the human soul into a human body. The body is a vessel that carries the immortal soul through this life. It returns to dust after death. Yet it will rise again.

After the resurrection the body will be immortal. It is but a material body. Yet it will then be free from corruption. The body of the just will

be glorified. It will be made resplendent with God's Own glory.

God has given great dignity to the human body. It is the receptacle of a pure soul. It is the habitation of an immortal spirit. Hence, God demands purity of body from all men.

The human body receives its life from the soul. It depends upon the soul for all its activity. It is guided by the faculties of the soul. Hence, it must be cared for with reason. It must be used with reason. God gave man a moral law. Part of this law God implanted in man's very nature. The rest He gave in His Revelation to man.

The moral law binds man to purity of soul and purity of body. It binds man to preserve the purity of his soul. For his soul is made to the image and likeness of God. It binds man to keep his body pure. For it is the habitation of the soul.

God communes with His rational creatures. He never abandons them. He watches over them every moment of their existence. In spirit they commune with Him. Hence, He demands purity in them. In His mercy God will listen to the agonizing cry of the unfortunate man who has lost purity. He will purify the penitent heart.

Man's destiny is to dwell with God forever. Soul and body are to inhabit the abode of the all-pure God for all eternity. All that enter there must be pure. Purity is a sign of predestination.

On earth our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul urges the faithful to seek purity and chastity. "Or know you not," he says, "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost Who is in you?"[3]

God dwells in us. "For you are the

[3] 1 Epistle to the Corinthians vi, 19.

temple of the living God; as God saith; I will dwell in them and walk among them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."[4]

"Wherefore go out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: And I will receive you."[5] "And I will be a Father to you: and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."[6]

Great indeed is the destiny of man. He is closely related to God even upon earth. His whole life is bound up with God. The human body shares in all this dignity.

The mind must be kept pure in thought. None but pure thoughts should be allowed to dwell in the mind. It was made to contemplate God.

Human nature was corrupted by

[4] Leviticus xxvi, 12.

[5] Isaias lii, 11.

[6] Jeremias xxxi, 9: 2 Epistle to the Corinthians vi, 16, 18.

the sin of Adam. It is prone to evil. It is weak. It is filled with appetites that constantly rebel against the law of purity.

Even the purest minds may be beset by thoughts against holy purity. These thoughts are like swine that have just come from their wallow. They rush across the threshold of a neatly kept cottage. But the master of the household drives them out. He will not allow them to besmear his abode with their mire.

Unwilled thoughts are never sins. They are like an unwelcome guest. The host may not at first recognize him. He may not realize his character. Yet soon he sees that he is not worthy to be his guest. He opens the door and shows him out.

God wants us to watch over our desires. He wants us to regulate them by right reason. He wants us to make them all subject to the

precepts of His law. Thus the lower appetites are controlled. Purity of body and mind is preserved.

The human body is beset by many passions. These are like wild beasts. They are ever lurking ready to spring upon their victim. But they are chained by God's grace. Each man carries the keys to the chains of the beasts that follow him. No one else can loose them.

The prudent man is safe. He will not trust the beasts. They may even have grown tame and harmless. Yet he knows that their native ferocity is hidden there. Once loosed they are only chained again with special help from God.

St. Paul urged the faithful to honor their bodies and keep them in purity. "I beseech you therefore, brethren," he says, "by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sac-

rifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service."[7]

Man should be pure with his own body. It is his only to use properly. He knows all the purposes for which he uses it. He knows that he is responsible to God for every movement of his body.

God has laid down strict laws for the use of the human body. Its powers and faculties must be used only according to His divine will.

God has given man powers of procreation. These are sacred faculties. Hence, God demands that they be used only for their true and proper purpose.

These faculties are to be used in the state of matrimony alone. This is God's Own provision. In no other case can they be used lawfully. This is the spirit and letter of the Sixth Commandment of God.

[7] Epistle to the Romans xii, 1.

God unites man and woman in marriage for a holy purpose. They are thus to become the progenitors of the human race. Hence, He demands conjugal fidelity in them.

By a sacred vow, man and wife have sworn fidelity to each other. They have become "two in one flesh."[8] They give each other conjugal rights. These rights are sacred between them.

Man and wife must guard the rights that they have sworn to each other. They alone can become "one flesh." They alone can use these rights. Justice towards each other demands it. Fidelity toward each other demands it. Purity demands it. God Himself has bound them to preserve intact from all the world these conjugal rights.

The wife is her husband's helpmate. She has been joined to him for a holy purpose. She was given to him for a

[8] Genesis ii, 24.

higher purpose than his own natural satisfaction.

God permits natural joy and satisfaction to exist between man and wife. Yet they live for a higher joy. They live to see devoted sons and daughters around them. It was for this God joined them together.

They use all their rights and privileges according to the will of God. Everything is ordered for its proper end and purpose. God has given divine laws to regulate the relations that exist between man and wife. The faithful Sara said: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust. . . . But a husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust."[9]

Those who listen to the voice of conscience know when they are obedient to the law of God. They escape

[9] Tobias iii, 16-18.

the remorse that pursues those who disregard God's precepts. They possess the peace that flows from duty well performed.

The true Christian home is made happy by the prattle of little children. They are pure-blooded children. They have inherited an untainted body from chaste parents.

True, some devoted souls are denied the joy of having little ones around them. Yet they have not brought this upon themselves by abuses. They have not misused the bodies God has given them. They pray for the blessing of children. But they resign themselves to the will of God.

God demands purity of the hands. Happy is he who has always guarded his hands from unlawful things. In youth the danger is greatest. It is enough for the wise to know that not all things are allowed to the hands. "Who shall ascend into the mountain

of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart."[10]

God demands purity of the eyes. Good and evil can enter the mind through the eyes. Hence, the eyes must be guarded from evil. "I made a covenant with my eyes," says holy Job, "that I would not so much as think upon a virgin."[11]

The senses must all serve to keep the mind pure. They must exclude all that can cause an unworthy thought. The ears should be deaf to all that offends purity. In fact, all the senses should be guarded.

All sensations of the body that are not good should be shaken off. It must be remembered that danger lurks in the feelings of the body. Temptations come unbidden. They are not wanted. Yet they must be rejected. They

[10] Psalm xxiii, 3, 4.
[11] Job xxxi, 1.

must never be allowed to win the will to accept them.

"Dearly beloved," says St. Peter, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul."[12]

The tongue must be strictly guarded. Wonderful is the power of speech in man. It can do great things for good or evil. Pure speech is a sign of a pure mind. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."[13]

The prudent man will guard his every word. He knows that thus he must keep his own heart pure. He knows that thus only can he be sure of avoiding scandal to those who hear him. He shrinks from implanting a harmful thought in another's mind.

"O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, for the memory

[12] 1 Epistle of St. Peter ii, 11.
[13] St. Luke vi, 45.

thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men.

"When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts."[14]

[14] Wisdom iv, 1, 2.

CHAPTER XX

Chastity

CHASTITY is a beautiful virtue. It belongs to the cardinal virtue of temperance. It controls the sensual desires of the human body. It reduces them to reason. It subjects them to the will of God.

The human passions are appetites that can not be fully satisfied. The more indulgence they receive the more do they call for pleasure. Their demands are unreasonable. They must be controlled by reason.

The passions are not evil in themselves. They are evil only when they are not governed by reason. Unregulated passions lead to sin. Regulated passions lead to virtue.

Man possesses reason and free will.

He is capable of controlling his animal desires. Hence, God gave him a law of purity. Man must not be ruled by his animal desires. He must be ruled by his rational nature.

Reason might almost dictate all the precepts of purity and chastity. Yet God has given positive precepts. These enlighten the reason. They enable man to keep his soul and body pure.

The precepts of purity are in keeping with our nature. The passions struggle against nature when left to themselves. Hence, the precepts of purity guard nature against the evil that passions might work against it.

Uncontrolled passions are like cancerous diseases. They eat away the beauty of soul and body. They leave a sightless mass of corruption behind. God's laws are the preventives of these revolting diseases.

Prudence is the parent of chastity and purity. The prudent know the

danger that lurks in the passions. They are quick to drive away temptation. They know the weakness of fallen nature. They seek safety in prayer. They put their trust in God.

Abstinence and sobriety are companions of chastity. Those who practice these virtues acquire skill in self-control. They become master of their own bodies.

Chastity can not exist without modesty. The senses must be guarded. All actions must be in keeping with propriety. Modesty makes us shrink from all that can offend the purity of our own hearts. It makes us careful in our intercourse with others.

Modesty promotes healthy reserve in looks and speech. It engenders delicacy and care of actions. It is the shield and the armor of purity.

Modesty belongs preeminently to the faithful Christian. He knows that the eye of God is upon him. He lives

in the presence of God. Therefore the Apostle said: "Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh."[1]

Continence belongs to the very essence of chastity. It is the virtue of self-mastery. It is endurance in the war against the passions. It is the firm stand of fearless souls against the unholy demands of the flesh. "No price is worthy of a continent soul."[2]

All the unmarried that have preserved themselves from all grave sin against purity are virgins. They possess the sublime virtue of virginity. This is the state of soul that God demands of all the unmarried.

Chastity must also be practiced by the married. It is then called conjugal chastity. It is a holy regard for the will of God in all that pertains to their state. To the unmarried this same respect for the will of God maintains virginity.

[1] Epistle to the Philippians iv, 5. [2] Ecclesiasticus xxvi, 20.

Purity begets many beautiful virtues. It is the greatest treasure man can possess upon earth. It must be guarded with great care and perseverance.

It is probable that no one was ever damned who had not first lost purity. St. Alphonsus says: "I do not hesitate to assert that all that are damned are damned because of this vice against purity. At least they are not damned without having fallen into it."[3]

It is but natural then that the faithful should strive to keep purity in their hearts. They know that God wants them to return to Him some day with body and soul pure.

Purity beautifies the lives of men. It brings joy and peace into even the saddest and bitterest lives. In truth, no heart is truly at peace upon earth except the heart that is pure.

[3] St. Alphonsus Ligouri ii, n. 412.

CHAPTER XXI

The Eighth Commandment*

"THOU shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."[1] This is the Eighth Commandment.

This Commandment binds us to be truthful. Truth is the agreement of our expression with the idea which we have in our mind. By signs and words we express our ideas.

Truth is the order which must exist between our judgments and our manifestation of them. It is a conformity between our mental conceptions and our expression of them.

We may have a false conception of something. We have not conceived the thing as it really is. Yet our ex-

* The Seventh Commandment is treated in Volume IV.

[1] Exodus xx, 16.

pression agrees with our conception of the thing. Here we are truthful. But we are in error.

Truthfulness is a virtue. Man is a social animal. Man must believe man. This is necessary for the conservation of society. Hence, in a certain sense even justice demands that we be truthful.[2]

Truth is beautiful. It begets faith amongst men. It ennobles the mind. It makes the mind of man more like the mind of God. For truth originates in the mind of God. God is truth.

Truthfulness is essential to honor. To be honorable with our fellowmen we must be truthful. To be honest with ourselves we must be truthful. For truth alone can show forth the beauty of the human intellect.

Truthfulness is a fundamental of Christian character. It is a standard of life for all good men. It is a principle

[2] Summa Theologica 2a, 2ae, a. cix; a3,

of upright conduct. It is a sign of fortitude and nobility of soul.

We must be truthful under all circumstances. It must be more than expediency with us. It must be a law with us.

We must be truthful in spite of all difficulties. At times it may be difficult to tell the straight-forward truth. It may threaten to bring shame upon us. It may bid fair to damage our reputation. It may seem unreasonable.

Yet always we are bound to tell the truth. Nothing can excuse us from this duty. It is a positive law of God.

It may not always be necessary to express all that we know about a subject. Yet our expressions must all conform to the truth as we see it in our mind.

Falsehood is opposed to truthfulness. It is an expression that is contrary to the truth that exists in the mind. It arises from a will to deceive others.

To utter falsehoods is called mendacity, or lying.

Knowingly to utter something false is a lie. It is a sin. In a slight matter it is a venial sin. In a grave matter it is a mortal sin.

By its very nature mendacity is a sin. "It is an action," says St. Thomas, "which falls upon undue matter. For words are naturally signs of intellect. Hence it is unnatural and undue for anyone to signify by word things which do not exist in his mind. . . . Hence all mendacity is a sin."[3]

Falsehood is opposed to the natural purpose of speech. Words were instituted by the Author of nature to signify human ideas.

Falsehood leads others into error. But this is an evil. Hence, falsehood is opposed to the natural law. For man has a right to be spared from evil.

[3] Summa Theologica 2, 2ae, q. 110, a. 3.

Lying is intrinsically wrong. Holy Scripture reprobates lying and falsehood. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal faithfully please him."[4]

"In no wise speak against the truth, but be ashamed of the lie of thy ignorance."[5]

Jesus bitterly reproached the scribes and Pharisees who were deceiving the people. "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth: because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof."[6]

Christ here warns all generations against those most abandoned men who deceive the people in matters of

[4] Proverbs xii, 22.
[5] Ecclesiasticus iv, 30.
[6] St. John viii, 44.

religion. To those same scribes and Pharisees He said: "I go, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sins."[7]

These are perhaps the most terrifying words in Holy Writ. They are directed against those who turned the people against Christ by their falsehood.

There are three kinds of lies. They may be jocose, officious or pernicious. A jocose lie is one that is told for amusement. It is only a venial sin. It is not opposed to charity.

A lie told in joke may not be sinful. The hearers may know that it is not told seriously. It is only told for fun. Then it is not sinful.

To utter a falsehood as an excuse or to shield someone is called an officious lie. It is generally a venial sin.

A pernicious lie is one that is in-

[7] St. John viii, 21.

tended to harm others. It is also an offense against charity. In a grave matter it is a mortal sin.

Simulation pertains to falsehood. A man simulates when he pretends to be other than he really is. He may pretend to be another person. He may pretend to be different in character from his true self.

Hypocrisy is a form of simulation. The sinner pretends to be a holy man. Externally he acts like a holy man. But he is deceiving others. He is a hypocrite. This hypocrisy is a sin. Of itself, however, it is not necessarily a mortal sin.

Flattery and adulation are forms of simulation. They are expressions of esteem and praise which the person does not really feel. He flatters and praises for the purpose of winning favor.

Boasting is a form of falsehood. It is excess in display of self. It is the

practice of magnifying personal deeds and worth. It is a kind of exaggeration. It does not exceed a venial sin. Often it is but thoughtless vanity.

Never is it permitted to utter a falsehood. Yet it is sometimes permitted prudently to conceal the truth under a kind of dissimulation. St. Athanasius is said to have adroitly used this dissimulation on a certain occasion. It was during a bitter persecution. He was being pursued up the river. He was some distance ahead of his pursuers. He came to a sharp bend in the river. Then he reversed his course and rowed leisurely back. As he passed those who were seeking him, they asked him if he had seen Athanasius. He answered: "He is not far away from you."

Dissimulation means merely to withhold a truth that the other person has no right to demand. St. Athanasius hid his identity as he had a right to do.

He dissimulated. He acted as though he were not the person they sought.

Dissimulation is also called mental reservation. A person withholds something in his mind. This changes the natural and obvious meaning of his words.

Restriction is purely mental if the true sense of the words can in no manner be discovered. Thus a person is asked if he has ever seen St. Peter's Church. He says: "Yes, adding in his mind, "in pictures." Another example may be given. A boy has just been in the pantry. His mother asks: "Were you in the pantry?" He answers: "No," adding in his own mind, "not yesterday."

This pure mental restriction is never allowed. It is falsehood. It proceeds from a direct intention to deceive.

For just reasons it is permitted to use ordinary mental restriction. This is sometimes called equivocation or

ambiguity. This is true when the meaning of words is doubtful. Thus Christ said: "Lazarus our friend sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."[8] Christ meant that Lazarus was dead. But he would raise him up as a person awaking from sleep. Thus Christ's words were ambiguous.

Words may be used that have a double signification. Circumstances may change the ordinary meaning of the words. An example may be given. A bricklayer is watching a Masonic parade. A bystander asks him if he belongs to the lodge. The bricklayer says: "I am a mason." He means that he is a mason by trade. But because of the circumstance the other understands that he belongs to the Masonic Lodge. Such equivocation is forbidden. It is simply falsehood.

It is always allowed to withhold a

[8] St. John xi, 11.

communicated secret. This is also called a professional secret. A confessor can deny that he knows anything about a sin which has been told him in the confessional.

For example, a priest might be cited as a witness in a murder trial. The accused is guilty. He has confessed his crime to the priest. The priest is asked if the accused confessed the crime to him. The priest can answer, "No." Indeed he is bound so to answer. Here the priest is not guilty of falsehood. His meaning is: "He did not confess the crime to me as a mere man." The priest need only answer as a mere man. He need not answer as a minister of Christ.

The same privilege belongs to lawyers, doctors, public officials, secretaries and others who receive professional secrets. They are even bound to keep them.

The truth may be concealed to save

another's good name. For instance, one person may be guilty of an offense. It is known only to one friend. His friend is asked whether the person committed such an offense. He may answer that he does not know. He means that so far as the inquirer is concerned he does not know. For he has no right to know. Nor has the other any obligation to tell him.

We are often asked for a gift or a donation. Or perhaps we are asked for a little loan. We do not wish to give. We say we have no money. Here we mean that we have no money for the purpose in question. It is so understood. Hence, it is not a lie.

A servant may say that his master is not at home. Yet the master is at home. Not to be at home in this sense means not willing to receive visitors. It is an accepted form. There is no falsehood in the servant's expression.

Mental restriction is never permitted

as a means to deceive. It is rather a means of protecting the truth. It must always be used with prudence and sincerity.

The truth must be sacred to all men. It is God's will. We should love it. "For God loveth mercy and truth: the Lord will give grace and glory."[9]

[9] Psalm lxxxiii, 12.

CHAPTER XXII

Our Neighbor's Good Name

BY A good name is meant the honor and respect which we hold amongst our fellowmen. It is called our reputation. It is the commonly shared estimate of our good qualities.

Our good name may arise from the virtues which we practice. It may be based upon our moral and intellectual qualities. We may be considered wise, learned, eloquent, honest, reliable, pure, faithful.

Our good name may be based upon external qualities. We may be rich, influential, of good birth. We may be handsome, strong, athletic.

A true reputation is based upon true excellence. But a man may seem to possess many good qualities. Yet

he has many hidden faults which belie his apparent excellence. Here his reputation is false.

Everyone has a right to his good reputation. It matters not whether it be true or false. It belongs to him. It is an external possession of which he is the rightful owner.

Everyone has an absolute and universal, unqualified right to his reputation. Wherefore, it can not be taken away from him without injustice.

A man has only a relative and limited right to his false reputation. His right is based, not in his own merits, but upon the common good.

Even the dead have a right to their good name. Men generally set high value upon the reputation they will leave after death. Their souls are immortal. Hence, they can still possess rights. Wherefore it is a sin of injustice to injure the good name of the dead.

Associations of persons have a right to their good name. Such are states, religious orders, societies. To injure their good name is a sin of injustice.

Ordinarily, we are not permitted to injure our own good name wilfully. In some cases it might be a grave sin wilfully to injure our good name. It might cause great harm to ourselves or others. We may have duties of charity or justice to perform. The loss of our good name might render us unfit for the performance of these duties. Then, too, the loss of our good name might do serious injury to others. They may be connected with us by relationship or other ties. It may bring disgrace upon them.

CHAPTER XXIII

Detraction and Calumny

DETRACTION and calumny are the sins by which one person unjustly deprives another of his good name. Unjustly to reveal another's secret faults or sins is detraction. To impute false faults and crimes to another is calumny. Calumny is a lie. Detraction is truth.

Detraction and calumny may be direct. Then the intention is to injure the other person's good name. They may also be indirect. They may proceed from levity or thoughtlessness without the intention to injure others. A weakness for much talking often leads to detraction and calumny.

The good name of others may be directly injured in different ways.

Crimes may be falsely imputed to them. Their evil deeds may be exaggerated. Their unknown and secret faults may be revealed. Their good deeds may be taken amiss.

Injury may be indirectly caused to the good name of others in different ways. Their good deeds may be denied. Their good deeds may be minimized. Silence may be maintained when they are being praised. They may be praised with coldness and reserve.

Calumny and detraction can be of themselves mortal sins. They are sins of injustice. They deprive others of their good name.

Yet detraction and calumny may be but venial sins. They may proceed from levity or thoughtlessness. They may not cause serious harm to others. They may have been committed without reflection.

Tale-bearing is a special form of detraction or calumny. It injures the

good name of others. Yet it does more. It engenders discord and enmity amongst friends. It often destroys peace and harmony. Hence, it is a detestable sin.

"The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed," says the Sacred Writer, "for he hath troubled many that were at peace. The tongue of a third person hath disquieted many and scattered them from nation to nation."[1]

The gravity of detraction or calumny depends upon the seriousness of the injury caused others. To reveal a slight sin may cause grave injury.

Ordinarily, it is a grave sin to reveal a grave fault. In general, it is a venial sin to reveal a slight fault. Detraction is more injurious to a person who is serious and prudent than to one who is given to levity and much talking.

Much depends upon the condition and dignity of the person injured.

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxviii, 15, 16.

The greater a person's dignity and the better his standing with others, the greater injury will detraction and calumny cause him.

Certain faults might be imputed to young and careless persons. It would constitute but a slight sin. But if the same faults were imputed to a priest or bishop the sin might be mortal. Here it might cause serious damage.

To reveal natural defects is generally not a mortal sin. Such would be to tell that another is ignorant, imprudent, ill-mannered.

A blameless defect may be very shameful. To reveal such a defect might cause great injury. It might be a grave sin against charity or justice. For example, a man is of illegitimate birth. This fact is unknown. It might cause him great shame and injury to have it revealed.

A detractor or calumniator sometimes does grave injury by vague

expressions. He says he knows things which to reveal would bring great shame upon another. He says he knows things which charity forbids him to mention. Here he would be guilty of a grave sin.

To speak of a crime that is publicly known is not detraction. However, it may be uncharitable to do so. The criminal may be trying to win back his good name. He hopes that his crime will be forgotten.

To say that a notorious drunkard was drunk is not detraction. However, to call him a thief might be detraction or calumny. He may have preserved his good name for honesty.

It is not permitted to reveal another's secret sin, adding that he has done penance for it. To do penance is indeed a virtue. Yet to mention a hidden crime always injures the person's character.

Vices are sometimes ascribed to

nations. One nation is said to be proud. Another is said to be murderers. Such expressions are not sinful. Rather they show lack of judgment.

Detraction and calumny are different kinds of sins. Detraction injures another's good name. But calumny does more. It also embraces the guilt of falsehood.

Holy Writ bitterly condemns detractors and calumniators. "The thought of a fool is sin: and the detractor is the abomination of man."[2]

Calumny and detraction are called backbiting. "If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly."[3]

We are bound as Christians to show love and kindness towards all men. "Admonish them . . . to speak evil of no man, not to be litigious, but

[2] Proverbs xxiv, 9.
[3] Ecclesiastes x, 11.

gentle: shewing all mildness towards all men."[4]

"Keep yourselves, therefore, from murmuring which profiteth nothing, and refrain your tongue from detraction, for an obscure speech shall not go for nought: and the mouth that belieth, killeth the soul."[5]

[4] Epistle to Titus iii, 1, 2.
[5] Wisdom i, 11.

CHAPTER XXIV

Revelation of Another's Crime

CRIMES may be public or secret. A crime that is generally known is public by law and in fact. It may have been publicly committed. It may have been secretly committed and later revealed.

A secret crime is one that is not generally known. It may be known to a few. Rumors of it may have been spread. Yet it bids fair to be kept from the general public.

Under certain conditions it is licit to reveal another's secret crime. Yet there must always be a just reason for so doing.

It is sometimes necessary to reveal another's secret crime. The offender's spiritual good may require it. There

may be no other means of turning him from the evil. It may be necessary to save others from being led into sin.

The delinquent is perhaps a child or a student in college. He has fallen into evil. He will not desist from wrong-doing. Then he should be denounced to his parents or superiors.

For his own spiritual or temporal good a person may be bound to reveal another's evil-doing. It may be necessary to save his own good name. Again, he may reveal it to someone to obtain advice or consolation.

One person is often offended by another. The evil deed is not known to others. He is sad and downcast over the offense. He may be excused if, for the sake of consolation or advice, he speaks of the offense to a friend.

Servants may, in like manner, reveal the injustice done them by their employers. Wives may thus speak of the injuries they have suffered from

their husbands. Children may mention mistreatment they have received from a parent. This must always be done prudently. The offender indeed suffers some injury to his good name. Yet the offended party is justified in seeking advice and even consolation.

Again, it may be necessary to reveal an evil-doer's secret deeds for the sake of others. He may be seducing them. He may be teaching them evil by bad example. The good name of an institution may be at stake. Then the secret evil should be revealed.

Two persons are about to marry. One has been guilty of a secret crime. It would later bring disgrace and injury on the other party. Here the crime should be revealed to the party concerned.

A man is sick. He intends to call a certain physician. A friend may licitly warn him of this doctor's evil

or defects. He is acting for the good of his friend.

A person intends to hire a servant or a teacher for his children. Another may justly warn him of the faults which the applicant may have.

Perhaps a confirmed thief has taken up his abode with others. His dishonesty may be licitly revealed to them. Thus they can guard against him.

By revealing a secret crime the offender here loses his good name. Yet he possesses only a false good name. His right to this honor is but limited. His own or his neighbor's spiritual good is superior to this right. Even the temporal welfare of others is sometimes to be preferred to his right to this false esteem.

Newspaper writers sometimes reveal the crimes of candidates who seek election to public offices. They may licitly reveal any defect or evil that

would render a candidate unworthy of the office he seeks. This serves the public good.

Yet newspapers often reveal secret crimes merely to satisfy the interest and curiosity of their readers. This is a deplorable and abominable practice. It does not help the common good. But it brings disgrace upon the unfortunate victim.

Historians have greater privileges. However, they must use these privileges prudently. They may even seek out evils from oblivion. Thus only can they write history. It is for the public good. History is the great teacher of life. It is the witness of truth. It is the proof of divine justice.

In writing and teaching recent history, however, care must be taken lest the relatives of the dead person suffer injury. Nothing should be revealed that would bring shame or disgrace upon them.

The historian must also guard against giving scandal. He should be especially prudent in writing about dignitaries. He should use great prudence in dealing with evils of the past. Here he might easily mislead his readers. He might leave a false impression. He might fail to show the true proportion between the good and the evil. He might fail to make clear the conditions and the circumstances which made the evil possible.

Holy Church wants her historians to tell the whole truth. The truth always adds splendor to our holy Faith. The danger arises from those other historians who tell only half-truths. Or perhaps they reveal the facts in a false light. They are false historians. The true historian strives only to show forth the truth in its own proper light.

CHAPTER XXV

Listening to Detraction and Calumny

EVERYONE is bound in charity to shield his neighbor from evil when he can do so without great inconvenience. The detractor inflicts an injury upon another. Those who hear him are obliged to hinder him if they can readily do so.

Those who so neglect to hinder detraction are guilty of a sin against charity. They sin by not deterring the detractor from his sin. They also sin by not shielding the other person from defamation.

It may be impossible for the hearer to hinder either evil. To attempt to stop the detraction might cause bitterness or enmity. Then the hearer is

not bound to interfere. He can perhaps but prudently show his disapproval by silence.

To neglect to hinder grave detraction may be a grave sin. Yet for this several conditions must be present. The detraction must refer to a serious matter. It must be of a kind that will cause great injury to the person against whom it is directed. It must be certain that it is unjust. For there may be some reason for revealing the crime. Furthermore, there must be a well-founded hope that the hearer can stop the detraction. Then the hearer must be in position to hinder the detraction without great inconvenience to himself. These conditions must all be present before there can be a grave obligation on the part of a hearer to impede detraction.

Many people listen to detraction unwillingly indeed. Yet they are naturally timorous and backward. Thus

they have not courage to admonish the detractor. This would probably constitute a grave difficulty for them.

Prudent persons often turn and walk away from a detractor. Sometimes they are able to change the conversation deftly. Again, they reprimand the speaker by a mere look. They show disapproval in their actions and their face. Thus they fulfil their obligation to shield their neighbor's good name.

Ordinarily, the obligation to hinder detraction binds only those to whom it is addressed. At times a person may be obliged by duty to be present where he will hear detraction. A secretary is in his chief's office. A waiter is near the guests when they defame their neighbor. Such would have no obligation to interfere.

Detraction is a sin against justice. Those who wilfully listen to detraction are guilty of an interior sin against justice. They consent to the injustice

that is being heaped upon their neighbor.

Holy Writ warns us to avoid detractors: "My son, fear the Lord and the king: and have nothing to do with detractors: for their destruction shall rise suddenly: and who knoweth the ruin of both?"[1]

Those who take pleasure in listening to detraction are guilty of a sin against charity. Internally they also sin against justice. They rejoice at their neighbor's injury. This sin is a sin of hatred.

There are some who are filled with curiosity. They are glad to hear detraction. It is news. It satisfies their eagerness for excitement. They do not consider the harm that is being done their neighbor. They feel no hatred toward him. Ordinarily such persons do not commit a mortal sin. Theirs

[1] Proverbs xxiv, 21-22.

is perhaps a sin of levity. They give little heed to what they hear.

There are those who induce others to defame their neighbor. This often happens in grave matters. They provoke them to tell what they know. They ask questions. Such persons commit a grave sin against justice when the detraction is a mortal sin. For they cause a grave sin of injustice.

Sometimes a person may be moved by curiosity. He is alone with a friend. He induces him to utter serious detraction. He does not intend to reveal what he hears. Here he would scarcely be guilty of a mortal sin. He really does not intend to injure his neighbor. Yet it is wrong. It is, at least, a venial sin. It is contrary to the spirit of charity and justice. For we are bound to guard our own good opinion of others.

Thus our Faith teaches us to love our neighbor. We must be concerned

for his welfare. We must love him with the love of benevolence. "Fulfil ye my joy," says the Apostle, "that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment."[2]

[2] Epistle to the Philippians ii, 2.

CHAPTER XXVI

Restitution for Defamation

DEFAMERS and calumniators are bound to repair the injury done by their sin. They must do so as soon as possible after they have unjustly taken away their neighbor's good name.

They are bound to do all in their power to restore the reputation they have destroyed. They are bound to make restitution for any material loss their defamation may have caused. Here they are bound to repair those losses which might have been foreseen in some manner.

Calumny and detraction impose a personal obligation of restitution. This obligation does not pass to the heirs of the offender. But there is also an obligation to repair material losses.

This obligation passes to the heirs of the offender if he does not satisfy it. It is, of course, supposed that the offender leaves sufficient means to satisfy this obligation.

A slight injury to a person's character sometimes causes serious material losses. Hence, from a venial sin there may arise a grave obligation of restitution. For example, a person has a good position as private secretary to a high official. Someone remarks to his chief that he is talkative. He loses his position. The detraction was slight in itself. But the loss was great.

A defamer may be unable to restore another's good name. He is not then bound to pay him money for restitution. However, he may be condemned by court to pay damages for libel. Then he is bound in justice to pay the money.

A defamer may only slightly damage his neighbor's character. He is not

then bound under grave difficulties to repair the injury done. But he may have caused grave injury by his calumny or detraction. Then he is bound even under grave difficulties to repair the damage. It is the demand of justice.

A person may innocently injure another's character. He is then bound to take care lest his words further injure his neighbor. He should recall them if he can well do so. Yet he is not bound to suffer great inconvenience in making a retraction.

The unjust defamer may neglect to make a retraction. Thus his neighbor suffers further injury from his unjust words. He is then bound to repair the new damage which his neighbor suffers from his neglect.

Ordinarily, the defamer can foresee that his hearers will relate his unjust words to others. Then he is bound to repair the injury with those to whom

the defamation has spread. Or perhaps the secondary defamers will fulfil this duty. This would satisfy his obligation. Then, too, it is generally morally impossible to retract words that have spread to others.

Sometimes a calumniator tells his evil report to a trusted friend in confidence. He enjoins him to keep it secret. But the report spreads. The calumniator could not foresee this. Here he is bound only to retract his words from the friend to whom he told it.

A calumniator is bound to retract his lies in a complete and effectual manner. It matters not if he suffer great injury thereby. He may lose his own good name. He may suffer material losses. Yet he is bound to retract his calumny. Only then could he be excused when he would thereby suffer far greater loss than his victim suffered.

It may be necessary for a calumniator to acknowledge that he lied. It may even be necessary to confirm his retraction by oath. If he has calumniated a person in the press, he must retract in the press. In every case the retraction must be effectual.

Strictly speaking, a detractor can not retract his words. His retraction would be a falsehood. Yet he must make reparation otherwise. He may use equivocal words. He may say that he spoke unjustly. He may say that he injured his neighbor when he told evil about him. He may say that he made a great mistake in telling such things. Yet he must not say that he spoke falsely. He must not say that it was a lie. For then he would be adding the sin of falsehood to the sin of detraction.

The detractor can also use other means to repair the injury he has

done. He can show his victim special consideration. He can praise him when occasion permits. He can show him honor and respect. This is perhaps the best means of repairing the injury done.

Under certain conditions the defamer is excused from making reparation. Perhaps he prudently thought that his words would cause no injury. He may have thought that his hearers would not believe his words. Someone may have contradicted his statements. Here he might not be bound to repair the damage done. Yet now he must try to prevent further damage to the person. Otherwise he would become responsible for the damage that ensues.

The damage done by a defamer may be removed by others. A court may have decided the victim's innocence. Others may have disproved the report. The evil report may have passed into

oblivion. Then the defamer would be relieved of his obligation to make reparation.

The victim may condone the offense of his defamer. This relieves the guilty party from his obligation to make reparation. But the offense may have injured others. This the defamed person can not condone.

Sometimes it can be presumed that the offense has been pardoned. Nothing is said. Yet the injured party shows by his actions that he has condoned the offense. Thus ordinary people generally excuse one another from the obligation of reparation for defamation.

Sometimes two persons defame each other. Both are guilty. One refuses to repair the injury he has done. Then the other is not bound to make reparation.

It is indeed a serious offense to rob another of his good name. A good

name is better than wealth or possessions.

Happy are they who know how to guard their speech. Prudent men often have a golden rule. They will not speak about another's character unless they have something good to say about him. This rule is a good principle of life for every true Christian. It is an application of the "golden rule:" "All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them."[1]

[1] St. Matthew vii, 12.

CHAPTER XXVII

Rash Judgment

WITHOUT sufficient reason a person is convinced that another is guilty of a sin. He judges his neighbor on insufficient evidence. This is rash judgment.

Again, a person may suspect another without sufficient evidence. He may also have a rash opinion. This is founded on slight motives. He may have rash doubts.

A person may have sufficient reason for considering another guilty. He may have the testimony of a reliable person. Yet the report is not true. Here he has formed only an erroneous, but an honest judgment.

There may be grave reasons for suspicion of guilt. A person has seen

another act imprudently. He has strong circumstantial evidence against him. Hence, he makes up his mind that he is guilty. This would not be rash judgment though it might possibly be erroneous.

Rash judgment is a sin against justice. It can be a mortal sin. It is opposed to a direct precept of Christ. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned."[1] Here Christ does not necessarily refer to eternal damnation. He undoubtedly refers to other evils that befall those who are guilty of rash judgment.

He who judges rashly does a grave injustice to his neighbor. Without sufficient reason he convicts him of sin. He remains firm in the judgment he has formed. Yet his neighbor has a right to be considered innocent until his guilt is proved.

[1] St. Luke vi, 37.

To be a mortal sin rash judgment must be a firm assent of the mind. It must be deliberate. It must refer to a grave evil.

Rash judgment is in a sense equivalent to calumny. Now it is a grave sin to calumniate our neighbor even to one person. Thus it is clear how rash judgment can be a mortal sin.

Often rash judgment does not imply grave injury to our neighbor. Or, perhaps, we do not fully advert to the evil it contains. Then, too, we may not realize how slight is the evidence of the evil. Again, the rash judgment may not have taken a definite form. In these cases it would not exceed a venial sin.

Circumstantial evidence is often deceptive. Charity bids us think well of our neighbor. We should think evil of none. Lightly to suspect evil of others generally denotes an ignoble mind.

We should be very slow to judge others. Never should we judge their internal motives. We should be unwilling to think ill of others until we are compelled to do so. It is a sign of a noble soul to judge others kindly. It is a sign of a pure heart to think well of our neighbor.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Contumely

WE MUST respect our neighbor. We must give him the honor and esteem that belong to him. "Render therefore to all men their dues," says St. Paul, "tribute to whom tribute is due: custom, to whom custom: fear, to whom fear: honour, to whom honour."[1]

Men possess special honor by personal excellence or position. To our superiors special honor and respect are due.

Honor is the external acknowledgment of another's excellence. Men are honored for their wisdom and their virtues. They are honored for courage and nobility of character. They are

[1] Epistle to the Romans xiii, 7.

honored for moral and even physical excellence.

Honor is due those who have achieved great things. Public benefactors also receive great honor. To deserve honor a man need not excel those who honor him. He need only possess those qualities for which men are generally honored.

Unjust injury done to a man's honor is called contumely. It is dishonor shown to the person. It is an offense committed in the presence of the person offended.

Honor is more precious to men than a good name. For it embraces a man's good name. It is something added to a good name. Hence, contumely is often detraction as well as insult. It is insult added to injury.

Contumely can be shown by words or by deeds. Thus a man may be dishonored by contemptuous smiles or

gestures. An omission may also injure a man's honor.

Contumely is a sin against justice. By its nature it is a mortal sin. Christ has warned us against this sin: "Whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."[2]

A person may not directly intend to dishonor his neighbor. Yet he deliberately shows grave contumely toward him. He knows clearly that his words or actions will be a serious injury to his neighbor's honor. Here he commits a grave sin against justice.

Joking ridicule is generally not sinful. It may indeed cause some embarrassment to the person against whom it is directed. Yet ordinarily it contains no malice or contempt.

Yet a serious injury may sometimes be couched in jocose words. Thus might even serious contumely be shown.

[2] St. Matthew v, 22.

He who has injured another's honor is bound to repair the damage he has done. He is bound to restore his neighbor's honor. He is bound to make restitution for any material damage that he has caused. He is bound at least to repay the losses that he had foreseen.

To repair a person's honor it generally suffices to show him the marks of esteem that are due him. However, a superior may have been injured. The contumely may have been shown to persons in high station. For the sake of discipline further reparation may be required.

Many ways are suggested to repair the injury done to a person's honor. The offender may greet him kindly. He may talk to him in a friendly manner. He may visit him and invite him to his home. He may ask his pardon.

To beg the offended person's pardon should suffice in all cases. If the

offended party is not satisfied he may seek satisfaction in court.

Under certain conditions the offender is excused from making reparation. The person offended may have condoned the injury. The offender may have been punished by the civil law for the offense. Or perhaps both parties were guilty of contumely toward each other. In these cases no reparation would be required.

A superior is not bound to ask pardon of a subject whom he has injured by contumely. He may repair the injury by other means. He may show him kindness and esteem.

A person has shown contumely to one of his own station. Or perhaps he has injured his superior's honor. The offended party will not accept any other satisfaction. He demands that the offender beg his pardon. Here the offender is bound to beg pardon of the person whose honor he has injured.

CHAPTER XXIX

Secrets

A SECRET is something made known to us which we are forbidden to reveal. Secrets are divided into three classes. There are natural secrets. There are promised secrets. Then there are committed secrets.

A natural secret is one which by its very nature binds us to silence. By chance we learn something about our neighbor. To reveal it would injure him. This is a natural secret.

A promised secret is one that we have promised to keep. The obligation to keep the secret arises from our promise. We may make the promise either before or after we learn the secret.

A committed secret is one that is

made known to us on condition that we promise to keep it. Our promise may be express or tacit.

Professional secrets are committed secrets. Such are the secrets told to confessors, lawyers, doctors and others from whom we seek advice. These persons make no explicit promise to maintain silence on what is told them. Yet it is understood that they are bound to strict secrecy.

Everyone has a right to his own secrets. To violate a secret pertaining to a grave matter is a grave sin against justice. It is a violation of justice to wrest another's secret from him by fraud or extortion. Unjustly to reveal another's secret is a sin. To make use of another's secret is also a sin.

Justice binds us to keep natural secrets. In grave matters the obligation is grave. However, there may be a just cause for revealing a natural secret. The common good may re-

quire the revelation of a natural secret. This may be demanded even for our own or our neighbor's private good.

To reveal a secret of slight importance is not more than a venial sin. In case of positive doubt a secret should be considered important. Then it can not be violated without grave sin.

An example of a natural secret may be given. A poor woman has hidden her little savings under a mattress. Another discovers and reveals the secret. A thief then steals the money. Here the revelation of the secret was a grave sin of injustice. It caused the poor woman serious loss.

A promised secret may bind only in fidelity. Then to reveal it would not be more than a venial sin. However, it may also bind in justice. It may pertain to a serious matter. Then it would be a mortal sin to reveal it.

A promised secret does not bind

under great difficulties. Yet the person may bind himself to keep it under all circumstances. He may promise to suffer great loss or trouble rather than to reveal it.

There is no obligation to keep an illicit secret. A promise to do so is void. For we can not bind ourselves in conscience to do evil.

A witness might have taken an oath not to reveal secret knowledge of a crime. Yet he is bound to testify. He is bound to tell the court all that he knows about the crime.

Men often seek advice and assistance from doctors, lawyers and other professional men. The information thus given is called the professional or committed secret.

Professional secrecy is respected by all courts. It is intended for the good of society. Men should be enabled to seek advice and assistance. They should feel that their private commu-

nications will be kept in strict confidence. Thus professional secrecy is a great benefit to men.

Professional secrecy imposes an obligation of justice. Unlawfully to reveal a professional secret would be a sin against justice. In serious matters it would be a grave sin.

The obligation to keep committed secrets is for the common good. It enables people to seek advice and help in their difficulties. They can submit private concerns without fear of revelation.

A committed secret may be revealed if the other party can be rightly and prudently presumed to permit it. Again, the secret may have become public from other sources. Then there is no further obligation to keep it.

The public welfare may sometimes demand that a committed secret be revealed. Yet a slight public good

would not justify the revelation of a committed secret.

A committed secret may sometimes be revealed to save another from serious injury. A lawyer learns professionally that one man intends to kill another. He may warn the threatened party so far as is necessary.

It may be necessary to reveal a secret to ward off grave injury from the person who communicated it. It may be the only means of saving him from serious harm.

A man may reveal a committed secret to save himself from grave injury. For instance, he knows professionally that a certain man has committed murder. He himself is accused of the crime. Here he may reveal the secret to save himself.

Thus it is sometimes permitted to reveal a committed secret for the purpose of preventing future evil. But it is not permitted to reveal the com-

mitted secret of a crime already committed. For instance, a man commits murder. Another is put in prison for the crime. It would not be permitted to reveal a committed secret to free the innocent prisoner.

The secret of the confessional is the most sacred of secrets. The priest is bound to preserve it with his life. Under no consideration could he reveal it. He must guard it even with his life.

It is not permitted to pry into other's secrets. It is forbidden to read other's private letters. It is a sin against justice. Yet it is not always mortal. At times the person may reasonably suppose that the letters do not contain any important secrets. Then it would be only a venial sin to read them.

A person may give others permission to read his letters. This permission may be explicit or tacit. Then there

is no harm in reading them. Again, the public good may require that letters be opened. This is often done in time of war.

Parents may read the letters of their minor children. Ordinarily, the superior in a boarding school may read the letters of the pupils.

Thus every precept of Faith provides for the well-being of the individual and of society. Every concern of man is considered. The rights of all are safeguarded. God wills that truth and fidelity should exist amongst all men. "Birds resort unto their like: so truth will return to them that practice her."[1]

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxvii, 10.

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